

ORGANIZING A COOPERATIVE VENTURE IN EBENEZER  
A.M.E. CHURCH, IN GREENSBORO, GEORGIA: FOOD  
CO-OP, A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

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Black people in this country in general and the members of Ebenezer AME Church in particular are facing a dilemma. They are facing the problem of having their government assistance reduced or cutout entirely. These cuts in government assistance threaten their very survival especially the senior members of the church. Some of them are too old or physically disable to supplement their income with part-time employment. Therefore, they will have to stretch their income and make every penny count.

The thrust of this project is to propose a way that the Black Church in general and the AME Church in particular can use a food co-op to help people help themselves. Whereas the method of organizing a food co-op is not carved in stone, the cooperative principles of mutual aid and cooperation have always been eternal in God's universe, especially for created beings.

This paper will start with a theological undergirding of the cooperative principles used by the first church as recorded in the Book of Acts of the Apostles. Also it will examine the historical events that guided Richard Allen when he founded the AME Church based on cooperative



principles. A conceptual model of a food co-op will be developed based on cooperative principles. The cooperative principle will be applied to the organizing process of a food co-op in Ebenezer AME Church.

A pre-test and post test model was used to assess the validity of the training process and this data was applied to the organizing process.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Issue

Since the election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States, congress passed into law different social programs, which were aimed at bettering the conditions of Black people, poor people, elderly people, and disabled people. These groups have relied on the Federal Government almost to the point of their very survival.

The Reagan administration got the Congress to pass legislation effective October 1, 1981 cutting back drastically on social programs for Blacks, the poor, the elderly and the disable. This trend of cutting the Federal budget on the backs of poor and the needy is still continuing in Congress in 1982. The President is asking for further cuts in social programs that won't help the poor and needy.

Fifty-three percent of the members of Ebenezer AME Church are depending on some form of government benefit for their living. The ones that are on social security thought their benefits were safe because they had earned them. If Black people cannot depend on the Federal Government, who can they depend on? They can depend on their God, maybe their Church and themselves.

The church in modern times has concentrated on the spiritual needs of man and overlooked his physical needs. The church, especially the black church, cannot afford to overlook the total needs of Black people. The black church must lead in Black people's struggle for full economic parity in the United States.

I have pastored only poor black churches. I have seen how little they have given to God's church because they are poor in this world's goods. They could have more of this world's goods if they owned cooperatives.

By the black church starting and operating cooperative ventures it will help lift Black people out of economic bondage. Then they can truly participate in God's blessing in the United States. This is the way the Black church should be heading if it is going to fulfill its mission in the world.

#### Definitions

A definition of major terms follow:

A.M.E. - The African Methodist Episcopal Church which was founded by Richard Allen.

Conceptual model - An idea of what a thing in general should be, a set of plans or pattern.

Cooperative - Pertaining to or designating any association for buying and selling to the better advantage of its members by elimination of middle-men's profits.



Ebenezer A.M.E. Church - Is an affiliate of the Connectional African Methodist Episcopal Church, a part of the 6th Episcopal District in the Augusta, Georgia Conference and the Athens District. It is located in Greensboro, Georgia and has 89 members.

Food co-op - An organization of consumers who buy food wholesale and sell it to their members at a savings.

Venture - An undertaking involving chance or danger; a speculative business enterprise.

#### Limitations

Organizing a food co-op is a time consuming process. It is a full-time job for a professional organizer. In addition to all the other duties of a minister, organizing a food co-op is hard work. He must spend a lot of time trying to get people to understand the benefits that cooperatives can have for them. If a person does not understand how a food co-op will benefit him, then how can he understand how it will benefit the mission of the church?

Secondly, the church membership is a mirror of the larger community from which they are also a part. People in general resist change. They find security in the familiarity and the tried. They reject the unfamiliar and the untried. A food co-op idea in a small rural community is new.

You will find some people in the church that resist because they might see this as a threat to their authority in the church. Some officers in the church will fight anything without their seal of approval. So the minister must spend additional time in trying to get people to follow him. The dictatorial method is not a good method to use in the organizing process.

Third, if the first two problems are not enough, you also must have a place to open a food co-op. The church that I am pastoring does not have such a facility. Then, the problem of encouraging the people to build a place that can be used as a food co-op arises.

Fourth, getting financing to buy supplies. All these things are limitations that must be overcome. But if the minister has an affirmed conviction that no problems are too big for God, and proceeds on that assumption, then he will succeed in organizing a food co-op.

#### Procedure

This project will proceed through four steps. The first step is to show a theological perspective of a co-operative for the purpose of developing a rationale for organizing a food co-op. In the theological perspective the book of Acts of the Apostles will provide the Biblical basis for a cooperative venture. Major principles in which a church cooperative venture can be based will be established. The church is also based on these principles.

The second step will deal with these principles from a historical perspective, that is how the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church used these principles in starting the AME Church and how they guided the Church from its formative years until today.

The third step will develop a conceptual model from the principles of cooperatives. How to organize a food co-op. How the end results will be the implementation of these principles into practical application.

Fourth, to set forward a way of measuring and evaluating the cooperative principles. The one-group, pre-test, post test design was used because the control group (church that was compatible with Ebenezer) refused to participate at the last moment. The evaluator was aware of this design limitation because there was no control group.<sup>1</sup> The evaluative instrument was administered before and after the program.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward A. Suchman, Evaluative Research Principles and Practice in Public Service and Social Action Programs, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), p. 94.

CHAPTER II  
COOPERATIVE VENTURE IN THEOLOGICAL  
PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

If life is sacred, then the maintenance of life is ordained by God. This chapter will relate the cooperative venture to a theological perspective based on the Holy Scripture. First, the examination of how the cooperative venture is a part of the maintenance of the life system created by God. The maintenance of the life system is in the things that meet man's basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, etc. While food is a part of that system, it is not the most important part according to the Scripture.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."<sup>1</sup>

Man is a physical and spiritual being. However, these two are inseparable. So the dichotomy between body and spirit does not exist. The time has come for the church and especially the Black Church to take a wholistic approach to people's needs.

Furthermore, it is time to show the implications that the cooperative venture can have on the black ministry. Today is a time of economic hardship and political indifference

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 4:4, The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (All Biblical quotations will be from the RSV unless noted otherwise).

to the needs of the poor and Black people. Cooperative ventures can be a new departure from the "status quo". When people come together, cooperate, aid and assist one another they can continue the upward path for a better and more humane society.

Biblical Bases for the Cooperative  
Venture in Acts of the  
Apostles

The first church is recorded in the Book of Acts of the Apostles which reflects a cooperative venture. The church was characterized by two things. First, they assembled themselves together on one accord. Secondly, it was an out pouring of the Holy Spirit demonstrated by miracles and wonders. The member of the first church demonstrated harmony and concern for the spiritual and economic well being of others. Their actions depicted an old proverb which states, "That a chain is no stronger than its weakest link." This is why the members of the first church concerned themselves with a wholistic approach to their member's needs.

I perceived that man is a wild animal unless his basic needs are satisfied. This is supported by modern psychology. That is, that the maintenance of life system must be in place and function properly if people are going to be fully human.

Maslow's theory of the Hierarchy of Needs states:

"The central idea is that man's needs - physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization - are arranged in a hierarchy of prepotency. Physiological needs are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and self-actualization at the top. Though man is in a state of want all of the time, according to the theory, what he wants is a function of his pattern of need satisfaction in the hierarchy. He can start out with lofty aspirations relative to love, esteem, and self-actualization, but be driven to more basic needs if those more basic needs become unsatisfied."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus teaches us when we pray The Lord's Prayer to ask God to "Give us each day our daily bread." This comes before we ask God to forgive us of our sins.

Jesus realizes that if we are to be truly humane each day we must have our physiological needs met. If not, a hungry person is an easy prey to all kinds of sins. It was because of hunger that Esau sold his birth right to Jacob. It is because of hunger that the Third World nations today are victimized by the Western nations and the multi-national corporations. It can be concluded that if basic needs are met, then man can ascend the hierarchy to self-actualization and communion with God. If these basic needs are not met then man descends the hierarchy and becomes a wild beast being driven only by his physiological needs.

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<sup>2</sup>David R. Hampton, Charles E. Summer and Ross A. Webber, Organizational Behavior and the Practice of Management, (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company), p.4.

There are a lot of reasons for hunger but the net result is the same, human beings cease to be human. The first church realized this, because in Acts 2:44-45 it states:

"And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need."

This was done to satisfy the need of the poor brothers and sisters among them. People are still in need today.

So conditions of the first church are still present today. The church will be called upon as never before if the present economic trend continues. The present administration in Washington is telling us, through unresponsive legislations that it is not the government's responsibility to look after the poor and needy. It will eventually become the church's responsibility to address these needs.

However, the churches are as unprepared to look out for the poor and needy as the poor and needy are unable to look out for themselves. By seriously examining the first church, two options are available. Today's church can follow their example and "sell all it has" or they can learn to apply cooperative ventures in today's world. It is unrealistic to assume the first option, but the creation of food, clothing, credit unions and housing co-ops is a realistic answer.

The Exegesis of Acts 2:44-45

"And all, who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need."<sup>3</sup>

There are three problems that I find in Commentaries on the exegesis of Acts 2:44-45. First, commentator lump these two verses in a large group of verses so as to conceal their meaning and implications for the church of today. In William Barclay's commentary on The Acts of the Apostles, he lumps verses 2:42-47. While there is nothing wrong with this group in and of itself, he gives the meaning of verses 42-47 as follows:

"They persevered in listening to the apostles' teaching, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Awe was in every soul; and many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. All the believers were together and they were in the habit of selling their goods and possessions and of distributing them amongst all as each had need."<sup>4</sup>

There is no commentary on these verses whatsoever.

Second, the above commentator overlooked the meaning of these two verses or used them to attach his enemies. John Calvin, the noted reformation leader, in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles states of verses 44-45:

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<sup>3</sup>Acts 2:44-45.

<sup>4</sup>William Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles, (Philadelphia; The Westminster Press), p. 25.



"Therefore, he (St. Luke) giveth us to understand that they were rightly joined together with brotherly love amongst themselves, and that they did indeed declare the same, because the rich men did sell their goods that they might help the poor. And this is a singular example of love and therefore doth Luke record the same, to the end we may know that we must relieve the poverty of our brethen with our plenty."<sup>5</sup>

To Calvin, this was a one time thing and had nothing to do with the nature of the church itself. He goes on to attack the Anabaptist as fanatical spirits, which do feign a commonality of property is put together and all may share. For Calvin this was an extreme position.<sup>6</sup>

Third, the commentator defends the church against this commonality as being communistic. Harper's New Testament Commentaries state:

"The primitive community experimented in a 'communism' of a totally different kind from the modern all-embracing economic and political form. It was voluntary and it was apparently an unsuccessful experiment..."<sup>7</sup>

The problem with these three positions is that none of them calls a spade a spade. The commonality of the

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<sup>5</sup>John Calvin, Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p. 130.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Chadwick ed., Harper's New Testament Commentaries, (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 71.

first church was communistic. I must agree that it was not the modern variety but it was communistic of a new variety which was based on love. What the commentators must have forgotten was that the Holy Spirit was in their presence. It was because of the Holy Spirit that the rich were willing to give up their wealth and share it with the poor and needy, for I can see no other reason that a rich man would sell all he has and give it to the poor. The call of the Holy Spirit must have been so great that three thousand souls were added to the church in one day.

Christ is still calling the church to sell all that it has and give it to the poor. Then pick up the cross and follow Him.

The church cannot be changed from what it was. To change the church would be to change Christ. For, Christ is the head and the church is his body.

#### Theological Affirmations of the Economic Life

Cooperative ventures are a part of man's economic system. This was created by God for man to have an orderly way to meet his economic needs. Economics is a system that entails production, distribution and consumption of wealth. Economics also deals with the satisfaction of material needs of people, (these are the only reasons for economic institutions to exist.)

Economists claim the following: that economic institutions exist for improving the efficiency and production of an inexpensive product. The meeting of people's needs is purely incidental to the process. Economic institutions are neither moral or amoral. Its only concern is in efficiency in production of goods and services. There is no place in economic institutions for Christian ethics or values. The doctrines of the Christian faith provide the basic ethical standards by which Christians ought to live. Christian theology is a systematic rational process that says something about the nature of God and man. How God, in Christ, dies on the cross for man's salvations.

While on the other hand, Christian theologians maintain that God demands justice and fair play in economic institutions. The prophet Amos condemned the merchants of Israel for their exploitations of the poor. Amos says

"Therefore because you (merchants) trample upon the poor and take from them exactions of wheat, you have built houses of hewn stone; but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine."<sup>8</sup>

Amos went on to support this idea. Any economic system that exploits people, will never be forgiven of its deeds. God will call down destruction upon those that oppress the poor and needy.

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<sup>8</sup>Amos 5:11.

In this section an effort is made to show the nature of economic life from the point of view of a theological perspective.

### Doctrine of God

Christian standard of conduct in economic life are derived from Christian Ethics. Christian Ethics as I see it is what we have a duty to do. This ethics is based on Christian Doctrines. Let us turn our attention to the Doctrine of God and its implications for economic life.

There are two important Christian teaching about God, the transcendence of God and the immanence of God. God transcends all of man's institutions. In Isaiah we find:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways and my  
thoughts than your thoughts."<sup>9</sup>

Some see this as God not being interested in the affairs of man and his problems. The merchants might feel that they have a free reign in economic life, and since God is disinterested, they will make all the profit that the market will bear. God is immanent, in that he has shown his love for man in the person of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for man's sins and salvation.

The Psalmist stated, "He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who form the eye, does he not see?"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Isaiah 55:9

<sup>10</sup>Psalm 94:9.

God is ever present in the affairs of men, because God is a God of History. He guides men, nations, and events according to His divine purpose, with this in mind.

God is concerned about the affairs of man's economic life. Before Israel became a nation, God laid down the rules and regulations for their primitive economy. These rules and regulations provide for the forgiving of all debts, freeing of all slaves, and leaving the land fallow every seven years. (Deut. 15:1-6, 12-18; Lev. 25:2-7). God prohibited the use of false weights and even the possession of them (Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13, 15).

Finally, God brings judgement on unjust practices of economic institutions whether it be atheistic communism or imperialistic capitalism. Greed and the exploitation of the poor and needy by the merchants of Israel brought that country to ruins. The people were carried away into captivity and the ten tribes of Israel were lost forever from the pages of history. Today America's capitalism is under the judgement of God because of its exploitations of the poor, the needy, and the Third World nations. If this nation is going to escape the wrath of God, then the church must intervene for God's will to be done and try to make our economic system humane. One way to take the greed out of this country's capitalistic system is through cooperative ventures.

### Christ is Lord

The doctrine of the Lordship of Christ states that everything was created for him. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians Church states emphatically,

"He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."<sup>11</sup>

I see Christ as Lord of our economic system. All institutions are accountable to him for their stewardship and how they meet the needs of poor people. They will be judged according to their actions. In the parable of the wicked tenants Jesus described how the Lord of a vineyard planted it and left it in the hands of tenants, then went into another country. Later, he sent a servant to get some of the fruits of the vineyard. The tenants assaulted the servant and sent him away empty handed. The Lord sent other servants. Some they abused and some they killed. Finally, the Lord sent his only son. The tenants killed him also. Then the Lord came himself and destroyed the wicked tenants and gave the vineyard to other tenants.<sup>12</sup>

The writer sees Christ as one of long suffering and patient with the economic institutions of this world. But his patience will not last forever. He will come and over-

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<sup>11</sup>Colossians 1:15-17

<sup>12</sup>Mark 12:1-12

turn the unjust economic system.

The economic system that is humane and caters to the needs of the poor and needy is the system that God will ordain and Christ Spirit will maintain.

Unlike mankind, Christ never exemplified any preference to any economic or social status of people. This has been indeed historically illustrated by the following:

"It is of special significance that the revelation of God has its center in the cross, which is the sign of the rejection of Christ by the various agents of culture in the first century. Today, we can say of Christ that, rejected by his own nation, he belongs to no natural human group, and he is the sponsor of no social system. The fact that he lived under humble conditions, born in a stable, the son of a carpenter, is a sign of God's indifference to human conceptions of rank. Jesus' own saying "the first shall be last: does not have initially an economic reference but it is characteristic of Jesus' habit of overturning the world's usual way of arranging people."<sup>13</sup>

#### Holy Spirit is Substance of Economic Life

The Holy Spirit is the substance of economic life. If the Spirit of God which gives substance and life to our economy is absent, then it can be compared to the valley of dry boned depicted in the 37th Chapter of Ezekiel. The valley was full of dead men's bones that were dried up by the sun. They represented desolation and destruction that come when the Holy Spirit is absent. In such an economic system, there is corruption, inequity, and greed which causes hunger and despair.

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<sup>13</sup> Alfred Dudley Ward, Goals of Economic Life, (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 404.

The following question can continually be asked. "Can these bones live again?"<sup>14</sup>

Yes, our economic system can live again, if it divest itself of greed and exploitation of the poor and needy and if it will fulfill the job that it was designed to do. This is taking care of the ones in this country who are least able to take care of themselves.

However, on the other hand, this economic system can not live again, if it continues on its present path of deception just to make a profit and disregard the survival of the poor and needy. This type of behavior was the primary reason Jesus denounced the Scribes and Pharisees as being lifeless on the inside.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like white washed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."<sup>15</sup>

In order for our economic system to live again, the Holy Spirit must give it life and substance.

#### Church God Agent (Christ Body)

An agency is a relation based upon an express or implied agreement, whereby the agent (church) is authorized to act under the control of and for the principle (Christ).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ezekiel 37:3.

<sup>15</sup>Matthew 23:29

<sup>16</sup>Ronald Anderson, Walter Kumpf and Robert Kendrick, Business Law: Principle and Cases, (Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing Co.), p. 709.



An agent has a fiduciary responsibility to his principle, he judiciously carries out the wishes of his principle. Jesus set up an agency between himself and the church. He said,

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you bind on earth shall be found in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loose in heaven."<sup>17</sup>

Jesus was authorizing Peter and the church to act in his behalf on earth. It is the responsibility of the church (Christ's agent) to do Christ work in the world. Christ's ministry in the world is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, and taking care of the elderly and shut-in. All of these things can be done through cooperative ventures. Cooperative ventures are the only way that the church can provide a solution to the provisional problems facing this nation and the rest of the world.

The church must remember that any agency Christ (principle) can create he can also dissolve. Inevitable destruction will take place if the church's work does not encompass helping the unfortunate. Christ is saying, "When you saw me hungry, you fed me not, when you saw me naked you clothed me not, when I was in prison you

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<sup>17</sup>Matthew 16:18-19

didn't come to see me." The church will answer this statement by its benevolent works. It must be prepared to affirm themselves as Christ's agency in this world.

#### Christians are Stewards of Economic Life

Christians have a responsibility as well as a duty to help bring economic life under the Lordship of Christ. He can get involved in the economic process by organizing and participating in cooperative ventures. By cooperative selling to their members at cost plus a small profit, it will cause merchants in the area to lower their prices to a realistic level. This also helps people in the community who are not members of a cooperative.

The present day economy is so complexed that a person needs an advanced degree in economics in order to understand all the forces and trends that affect our economic system. To add to the confusion, professors of economics in large universities given the same data will often times interpret it differently. There is also disagreement as to the different methods to explore and to stabilize the economy.

Many Christians feel that the church has no business in economic life. Literally, the Bible doesn't sanction any form of organized economic system.

"Although the Gospel champions know economic system it challenges some of the fundamental attitudes and practices of modern economic life."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>George F. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 307.

Jesus has always taught the primary importance of spiritual values.

"Jesus explicitly denies the primary of material values over spiritual ones. He warns men against anxiety concerning food and clothing, and insists that they put first the Kingdom and its righteousness."<sup>19</sup>

In our society just the reverse is true. This type of thinking is shown in the following:

"The theory of modern economic individualism has emphasized decisions are governed by economic laws and that moral consideration are secondary or even irrelevant."<sup>20</sup>

This has caused the suffering of untold millions of people and is the basic of hunger, wars, and rape of natural resources all over the world. The Christian's job is to show the folly of this thinking, and to exemplify that all systems come under the Lordship of Christ.

Christian stewardship in economic life is much more than how a Christian handles his own resource, but how large corporations handle their resources and how they use our natural resources. It is a Christian's duty to also participate in the political process. They should help elect people to public offices that will legislate public policy and control large corporations and their use of power. These things must be done in order to make a more humane nation.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>20</sup>Op. Cit., p. 307.

Finally, in the maze of the impersonal aspect in the economic life, people are looking out for their own interest. A Christian must remember that the supreme act of love was that Christ died on the cross for man's sins and eternal salvation. A Christian's action and behavior should always be guided by love. The love of neighbors as one's self, means that a Christian looks out for his neighbor's interest first and his own second.

CHAPTER III  
THE BACKGROUND FOR COOPERATIVE  
VENTURES IN AME CHURCH

Introduction

In the last chapter, cooperative ventures were viewed from a theological perspective. It was shown how the members of the first church started a cooperative venture. They sold their property and gave the profits to the church and each member shared in the profits according to their needs. God is also the Creator of economic life and all of man's institutions fall under His divine providence. God demands justice in all human relations and in human institutions.

This chapter will show how the founder of the AME Church used the cooperative principles. While cooperative venture is a relative modern phenomenon, the principles on which they are based are eternal. The writer of Ecclesiastes states, "There is nothing new under the sun". The principles of cooperation and mutual aid were used by Richard Allen in founding the AME Church. These principles have been characteristic of the AME Church ever since. They sustained the church in its formative years of trials and tribulations. When the vast majority of Blacks were slaves in this country, survival depended on cooperating and assisting one another.

The Free African Society founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones was based on cooperative principles among free Blacks in Philadelphia. The only help that they could depend on was help from each other. The cooperative principles had been a part of the AME Church from its inception. The Church's publishing house and colleges were created through cooperative effort.

Bishop F. H. Talbot, Chief Pastor of the Sixth Episcopal District, states, "that the cooperative principles was a part of the AME Church from the very beginning."

#### Cooperative Venture Defined

Cooperative venture is a non-profit association organized to provide members with goods or services at a savings. A cooperative is a self-help organization that is democratically controlled by its members. It is an organization where each member shares in the risks and each member shares in the profits if there are any.

The cardinal principle of the cooperative is cooperation and mutual aid among its members. This principle can be used to start a food co-op, credit union, or a church.

#### A Brief History of Cooperatives

The first cooperative was started back in the eon of time as recorded in the Book of Genesis 1:26 when God said, "Let us make man". God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Spirit, cooperated from the beginning of time so perfectly that they are known as three in One. So, cooperation among men is always in reason. Man was created in the image of God, to live on the earth as brothers and sisters and care and share with one another. Ashley Montague states the following in his book On Being Human:

"Man is born for cooperation, not for competition or conflict. This is a basic discovery of modern science. It confirms a discovery made two thousand years ago by one Jesus of Nazareth. It is the principle of humanity, of one world, one brotherhood of people."<sup>1</sup>

This basic assumption has remained stable from the early day cooperatives until modern day cooperatives.

The early co-op in the Western World was formed in Rochdale, England in 1844. The main priority of the founding weavers was to become free from the credit system of shopkeepers. According to the Consumer Cooperative Movement of 1921, the primary objective of a cooperative is as follows: To employ and to directly be responsible for their own production, distribution, education, and government. Rochdale invariably became a chief symbol of cooperation. The basic premise of the essential principle of "One Man-One Vote", and profit distribution among membership and education are classic in a cooperative.

The Industrial Revolution understandably produced the first co-op. Indirectly the creation of new inventions and

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<sup>1</sup>Ashley Montague, On Being Human, (New York: Hawthorn Book, Inc.), p. 109.

improvements shocked workers. Workers felt the pinch of an economical system they couldn't understand, much less control. This is best described by Jacob Holyoake in History of Cooperation.

"The tendency of completion which the introduction of machinery intensified, lowered wages, and pushed the mass of workmen with increased force against the walls of the workhouse. These were the years of child labor, the sixteen hour workday and the company store."<sup>2</sup>

Cooperative ventures thrive in a country founded on the principle "for the people and by the people". This produced a healthy economic environment for cooperation. Rochdale's type of organizing sprung throughout Philadelphia in 1860.

The most consistent type of successful co-op arose from two major sources; namely, (1) Producers Co-op and (2) Consumers Co-op. Producers Cooperation stemmed from the desires of farmers wanting more control over the prices they received from their product. The Producers Co-op began with the banding together of farmers wanting higher prices and acquiring public services that were taking too long to spread to the rural area. Many farmers acquired the use of electricity from this basic cooperative effort. The electric companies had traditionally by-passed the rural area in order to cater to a large market within the city limit. Producers Co-op

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<sup>2</sup>George Jacob Holyoake, History of Cooperation, (London: Trubner and Co.), p. 16.



followed different expansion of growth depending on the crops with which they were involved and the region of the country they were geographically located within. The uniting, through this cooperative effort, has been the basic of other organizing groups such as the Populists, Greenbackers, and Wobblies.<sup>3</sup>

Individual producers co-op histories exemplify all the changes of an evolution of current radical groups. A prime example of this statement is that of the Saskatchewan, one of the Prairie Provinces of Canada that produces nearly two thirds of Canada's wheat. They began by establishing a network of cooperative organizations. This effort expanded and eventually produced a socialist government in the Province. This uniting simply illustrated the power of working together. The growth began in the 1920's. This marked the settling of an area where strong, settle ties by farmers traditionally didn't exist. However, the effort of this group produced a pattern of economic, social, and political acceptable behavior. Many of the settlers were susceptible to new ideas and radical policies which made growth even more inevitable.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>William Ronco, Food Co-Ops: An Alternative to Shopping in Supermarkets, (Boston: Beacon Press), p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

The Saskatchewan example combined producers and consumer co-op efforts. This combination stuck and gave a basis for the Socialist Party. As discussed earlier, this party was effective until the 1920's when the party lost at the polls.

The Consumer Co-ops came into existence because there were consumers who wanted more control over the prices they paid for necessities. An excellent case study to exemplify consumer co-op was the co-op supermarkets and related services in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. This all began with the Finnish migration to Massachusetts.

"Finnish immigration between 1883 and 1924 was estimated to have been 302,095 people."<sup>5</sup>

These people suffered under their present country governmental system. The political unrest in their country was in response on a nationalistic cooperative to resist opposition. Many of the immigrants helped form cooperative organizations once they reached the United States.

Finns also came to Fitchburg for economic reasons. They often wanted to pursue weaving work that was offered at the local mills. The increasing concentration of this ethnic population simply attracted more and more Finns. The Finnish people began their first successful co-op in 1910. The co-op's beginning traces back to dissatisfaction with the local grocery. The Finns founders

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<sup>5</sup>Op. Cit., p. 117.

sought to do the following within their co-op:

"Raise \$5,000 capital in five dollar member shares, and designated a \$1,000 minimum reserve before any earnings could be distributed to shareholders."<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally, within co-ops "One Man - One Vote" is infalliable. Such was the case in the Finns co-op. By-laws did limit the investment of any one co-op member to forty-shares and also put a five percent ceiling on the rate of interest allowable on member's investment. The co-op flourished and prospered many years. The stability of the store was demonstrated with the opening of a milk distribution co-op.

Major problems inevitably did arise to battle on the foundation of this co-op. A political storm arose in early 1920's - when the community split violently between supporters and detractors of Communism. The depression also had its toll on the co-op. It managed to survive both these traumas. It began taking over and operating surrounding failing co-ops and ran them as branch stores. After the depression, the co-op was able to grow and expand to include a coal yard, fuel, oil, and gasoline sales. The Finns co-op prospered throughout the years.

"It's only been the last several decades that the co-op began to suffer. It had begun to experience some serious deficits. The internal problems

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<sup>6</sup>Op. Cit., p. 117.

accompanied by the diminishing of the Finnish community started the problems for the co-op."<sup>7</sup>

Today the Finns co-op, supermarket has additional problems. Sales had continued to decline and no patronage refund was declared in 1972 or 73. The competition with the "co-ops" is an additional problem. Unlike the new co-ops supermarkets which sell food at low prices, the Finns supermarket sells at regular market prices. The return savings to members once a year in the form of a patronage refund is based on the total amount of their purchase. (It's obvious people don't want to wait a year to collect patronage refunds.) The co-op is run by a board of directors elected from the aging membership. This inevitably leads to inflexibility and out-of-date management. The modern debate of old co-op/versus new co-op is that the old co-op now in existence is ancient and just reflects the organization of earlier cooperative efforts. William Ronco offers a type of solution. In his book, Food Co-op, he states:

"If longevity is the goal of current food co-ops, there are some important lessons to be learned. Longevity can only be obtained when organizations reach the interest and needs of its members and the surrounding community."<sup>8</sup>

Cooperatives today are no longer expanding and growing as they did in the past. However, they still have in-

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<sup>7</sup>Op. Cit., p. 119.

<sup>8</sup>Op. Cit., p. 122.

fluence on government operations. Many people are still receptive to co-op's ideology. Current co-ops are not in any way an offshot of the stores established by the Weavers or in Fitchburg. The current co-ops appear to be traced through their initiations back to student activism in the late 1960's. The evaluation of the current co-op wave to societal unrest especially during the 60's really only begins an understanding of recent co-op history. In many cases the link between anti-war organizations and food co-ops was a direct one. A prime example is the evolution of the Minneapolis area co-ops. They represent co-op growth that is traced back to a "Peoples Pantry" which is a network in the late sixties. The idea is best explained by George Breitman's words in the International Socialist Review (Vol. 31, No. 7 of Oct. 1970). Breitman characterized and gave explanations as to reasons for the "Current Radicalizations." He states the following:

"...a period of Radicalization is one in which large number of people, responding to material conditions, change their attitudes about important questions, beliefs, values, customs, relation, arrangements and institutions - social, personal, philosophical, political, economic, cultural. Things that were previously accepted or taken for granted begin to be questioned or rejected."<sup>9</sup>

According to William Ronco in Food Co-Ops: An Alternative to Shopping in Supermarkets, there are

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<sup>9</sup>George Breitman, "The Current Radicalization," International Socialist Review 31 (October 1979), p. 7.

no chain events that don't inevitably lead from war protest to organization of food co-ops. The most important phenomenon to remember that this type atmosphere enables people to get involved in a lot of different activities. Their activities spurred other activities at more general and abstract levels and helps contribute to an atmosphere that enables co-ops to evolve.

The production of any type of cooperative means people uniting and striving together. Richard Margolis, a modern cooperatist, once stated that co-ops involves people trying to get their hands on the capitalist wheel and making it turn for themselves. It is reasonable to assume that if either producers or consumers cooperative does this independently, the other will inevitably suffer.

#### Richard Allen

When Richard Allen was born in 1760, little did anyone know he would be responsible for the birth of the African Methodist Movement. At the time Allen was born in Philadelphia, the religious scene was prominently dominated by two religious doctrines: Anglicans and Quakers. The specific date of Methodism is inconclusive mainly because of insufficient documentation. There were also smaller sects around to give the city theological variety. It can be said that Methodism did have a

contribution to the intellectual diversity of the City of Brotherly Love.<sup>10</sup>

The atmospherical environment in 1760, made Negroes recognize slavery, and try to survive as a more immediate concern than any religious sector. Slavery in the northern region of the country was milder than southern slavery. Even with the absence of the plantation system, northern slavery did affect families in matters of degrees. Families were at random separated for sale. The northern laws inadvertently controlled Negroes by regulating the use of firearms, liquor, public meetings, and interracial marriage. Northern slaves lived in their owner's home. Therefore, their health and personal needs received careful attention. (This is unlike the southern slave quarters and accommodations.) The northern slaves were invariably pressed to conform to white standards of mannerism.

The Northern economy provided for slaves to be employed at domestic tasks. Northern slave services were regarded as luxuries rather than necessities, thus, making their maintenance uneconomical during periods of financial strain. This eventually led to the abolition of slavery in the Middle States.

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<sup>10</sup>Carol V. R. George, Segregated Sabbaths, (London: Oxford University Press), p. 18.

In 1760, when Benjamin Chew, Attorney-General of Pennsylvania and farmer, suffered a financial loss he kept at least one family of slaves - the Allen Family. The family was responsible for the domestic work in the Chew's household. However, during the 1760's the city of Philadelphia suffered from a general economic crisis. Chew realized that he would have to part with some of his assets. He decided not to forfeit his houses or land but he sold his family of slaves. The Allens were sold as a unit which warded the family some comfort. The existence of suspicion entered because the family didn't know to whom or where they would relocate. The parents and four children were sold into Delaware state, near Dover to the Stokley family. Years later, the parents and a brother were sold away once again. The loss of his parents happened at a highly impressionable time in Allen's life. This may have encouraged him to seek outside comfort. Richard became exposed to indoctrination of the Methodist methodology during this time. Richard and his brother would attend the services in the woods. Richard recorded his conversion experience in his memoirs years later. He seemed to suggest that his conversion marked a release from slavery as well as from sin. He describes this event as the following:

"I was, he said, awakened and brought to see myself, poor, wretched and undone, and without the mercy of God. I must be lost. Shortly after, I obtained



mercy through the blood of Christ, and was constrained to exhort my old companions to seek the Lord. I went rejoicing for several days and was happy in the Lord, in conversing with many old, experienced Christians. I was brought under doubts and was tempted to believe I was deceived, and was constrained to seek the Lord afresh. I went with my head bowed down for many days. My sins were a heavy burden. I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day. One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled. I cried. My soul was filled. I cried, enough for me the Savior died. Now my confidence was strengthened that the Lord, for Christ's sake, had heard my prayers and pardoned all my sins."<sup>11</sup>

Allen and his brother continued to remain faithful to the prayer meetings in the woods, and service was led by a circuit rider. They always performed their farm chores first in spite of their spiritual endeavors. Eventually, they were able to persuade their master to let them buy their freedom. Once he achieved his freedom, he realized he had no marketable skills or former education. His religious zeal led him to become a minister.

Allen was encountered with racism many times during his life. The first within the clergy happened when he was approached by one of two original Bishops of American Methodism, Francis Asbury. Asbury requested that Allen become his travelling partner under some adverse condi-

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<sup>11</sup>Richard Allen, The Life Experiences and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, (New York: Abingdon Press), p. 15.

tions. Asbury told Allen he would provide him with food and clothing, but when travelling south, he was not to mix or mingle with the slaves. Allen would also have to lodge in the carriage during southern travel. Allen's response were as follows:

"I told him I would not travel southward with him on those conditions. He asked me my reasons, I told him if I was taken sick, who was to support me?"<sup>12</sup>

Philadelphia became Allen's permanent home after this incident.

Religious forms in Philadelphia were as diverse as everything else about the city. The numerous smaller sects never attracted significant number of Black people, nor did the Methodist Church. A small number of Blacks would attend white congregations. The name of the white Methodist Church was St. George. The stipulated agreement would be that Blacks would have to agree to segregated seating. When the congregation seating was filled to capacity the whites would move Blacks from their seats and place them against the walls. Allen was convinced that the church officials regarded the "colored brethen" as a "nuisance." The ingredients for a radical confrontation were present, awaiting the right stimulus to set them in motion: such a situation did present itself. Allen and his friends arriving just after the service had

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

begun, were directed by the sexton to seats in the gallery. The places that they occupied were apparently not the ones intended for them. During prayer the trustees began pulling them off their knees.

The dramatic withdrawal of Black Methodist from St. George marked the beginning of the first Black church movement in Philadelphia. Seven months after the withdrawal, the Preamble for the Free African Society, a cooperative effort for blacks, was complete. The society was organized by Richard Allen and Absolsom Jones, a very close associate to Allen. Its meeting consisted of developing a plan for future endeavors. Through the absence of a home, church members looked increasingly more to the society to suggest some kind of meaningful substitute.

The society was greatly influenced by Quakerism in subtle but significant ways. Allen thought that these former Methodist (in the Society) were passing judgment on their old denominations by adopting Quaker practices. This displeased him. He had not broken his ties with St. George to become a Quaker, and refused to accept their doctrine of Episcopalianism.

The Society members wanted to have a religious basis. The majority voted to be Episcopalians, remembering their experience with the Methodist. Allen and Jones did not vote with the majority. Allen was discontented with the Society's failure to form a denominational

alliance with the Methodist and this led him to break with the group. Jones respected the decision of the majority and directed their efforts in gaining recognition by the Episcopal hierarchy.

"Absalom Jones, though less dynamic was more patient and conciliatory when it came to dealing with refractory members. He sensed the feelings of the members, and accurately diagnosed their desires in forming new religious tie."<sup>13</sup>

The previous united group was now divided into two groups. The larger group followed Jones to gain Episcopal recognition, and the second, a smaller group, accepted Allen's direction to remain Methodist.

Jones' numerical advantage permitted him to begin immediately in directing resources for a church building. Allen had to wait to gain economic support. While Allen developed his plans, the remainder of the group of seceders worked with Jones to devise a public subscription campaign that would help them acquire a building. When their building was complete, it was dedicated as the African Episcopal Church on July 17, 1794.

In the meantime, Allen had found a simple meeting place by moving a blacksmith shop. The need for a larger building was very apparent. Allen's personal resources, along with his followers were scarce. They raised funds through a general public subscription also. Allen requested the help of his two friends, Dr. Benjamin Rush

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<sup>13</sup>Op. Cit., p. 58.

and Robert Ralston, both members of the Abolition Society. Allen often said that these men's names should always be remembered among the Methodist. He describes this in Life Experience.

"These two philanthropist pitied our situation, and subscribed largely towards the church, and were very friendly toward us, and advised us how to go on."<sup>14</sup>

Rush and Ralston were known mainly because of their civic interest in abolition of slavery. They were involved in a wide spectrum of community projects. Their help in the public subscription campaign was vital in raising money for the new building.

The Methodist denomination (St. George) officers were as unimpressed by Allens white patrons and black associates as they were by his plans to build an African Methodist Church. The issue of a separate black church infuriated the Methodist elders. They believed that the Negroes could receive all the spiritual uplifting they needed from St. George. They were very non-supportive to his efforts.

"They insulted and harassed him. They threatened to disjoin him from the Methodist doctrine."<sup>15</sup>

Allen tried to make them understand that he had remained a devoted Methodist and wouldn't deviate from its teachings. He simply could not accept segregation and

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<sup>14</sup>Op. Cit., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Op. Cit., p. 61

discrimination in the white church when Blacks had the potential to create a church of their own. He quickly came to realize he could not depend on any assistance from the Methodist denomination.

Once the money had been raised, they began laying plans for the new facility, and in the process they acquired some practical knowledge as they negotiated with local businessmen. By June 29, 1794 they were able to dedicate their own church building. The service was presided over by Bishop Asbury. The current Methodist elder in charge, Reverend John Dickens, participated in the celebration and suggested the name of Bethel for the new building.

Local tensions were not relaxed long after the dedication of the new building. Several issues remained unanswered such as, the matter of control over preaching appointments and property rights. The building itself remained a source of discontent. The Africans assumed that they should control it since they financed its building. The Methodist maintained that denominational policy required conference control of all property. The issue of documentation of incorporation of the building was also disputed. The African Supplement, a doctrine that was added to the original charter, settled this dispute.

The Supplement placed Bethel in an anomalous position with the denomination. This provided an obvious basis for the break with the St. George Methodist Church.

A tug of war existed between St. George Methodist Church. Finally, Richard Allen gave all hopes of reconciliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Reverend Allen called a General Conference of the independent African Methodist Churches in April of 1816 at Philadelphia for the purpose of organizing them into a Connectional Church. Sixteen delegates assembled at Philadelphia, six from Baltimore, five from Philadelphia, one from Wilmington, Del., three from Attleborough, Pa., and one from Salem, New Jersey.

On April 9, 1816, Reverend Daniel Coker was elected Bishop by the Conference. On the following day, Reverend Coker declined the office of Bishop. Reverend Richard Allen was elected and served as the first active Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Richard Allen was a very active man. He was Bishop of the AME Church, pastor of Bethel, civil leader, proprietor of a boot and shoe store, and husband and father to his six children.

"In his later years the Bishop carried on a boot and shoe store, which trade and business he had learned in the earlier part of his life. He retired from this business two or three years prior to his death, at which time his estate

was worth between thrity and forty thousand dollars all of which was accumulated by his own intellect, industry and thrift."<sup>16</sup>

Richard Allen believed in industry and thrift all of his adult life, not only for himself, but for all black people. He died on March 26, 1831.

### Free African Society

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during 1780 Blacks were not legally oppressed. The economical oppression of Black people was very apparent. The economic survival was a main concern of blacks. Racial prejudice was a fact of life. Blacks had many obstacles placed before them. There were friends and Quakers, who assisted tremendously. The Quakers aided in creating schools. They also created a sentiment in the environment which helped the economic and social lives of Blacks.

In 1780 Blacks had gained a secure economic position in Philadelphia. They worked as domestics, skilled, and unskilled labor. The masses still suffered from poverty. However, some blacks had businesses which they conducted professionally. This minority was owning property, supporting schools, organizing societies, and churches. This group, being free from economic slavery, needed only an aggressive leadership to channel their energies into a productive avenue. The leadership needed was called

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel A. Payne, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Vol. 1, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968; reprint ed.), p. 85.



the Free African Society and it was created to form an active union among the blacks.

"The formation of this organization which had as its purpose the development of a beneficial and self improvement society."<sup>17</sup>

This cooperative effort was established on April 12, 1787. This first Negro institution had the characteristics of a benevolent and reform organization. One of the membership's primary concern was in giving mutual aid in the time of need to its members. It also existed to support one another in sickness and to benefit their widows and fatherless children. This was primarily a joint effort, for and by black people, to try and assist each other. Through uniting, the group felt they could directly address the other social and economic needs. This society was the first evidence of an organization among Blacks in America. The society was strengthened by its outstanding leadership. There was division among them as to the religious affiliation, but they did establish the first mutual aid society for Blacks. The foundations of the first African Episcopalian and the first African Methodist Church originated in this society.

The society had great confidence, respect, and was influenced by Quakerism. One of their rules was that the

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<sup>17</sup>Charles Wesley, Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom, (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc.), p. 60.

elected clerk and treasurer must be a Quaker. The Quaker influence inevitably made Richard Allen grow restless and led to his departure with the Society. Absolom Jones was sympathetic with Richard Allen. Even after their separation, a warm friendship existed between the two men. They were both devoted to associations to which they devoted their lives. Richard Allen was not persuaded to renew his membership in the society. He later cooperated with the members in the organization of an African Church.

The Free African Society took on many cooperative efforts. They maintained close ties with the Quakers and cooperated with the abolition societies in their endeavors. In 1790, a committee of the Free African Society assisted the Gradual Abolition of Slavery Society in its efforts to ascertain the number of free blacks in the city.<sup>18</sup>

In September 1790, the society's cooperative efforts to organize a church and purchase a lot for its erection were realized. A subscription list was drawn up and people were asked to contribute. Many people gave funds for the erection of the African Church. Allen, although not re-admitted to membership, served on a committee of four to help raise funds. "Here, said Richard Allen,

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

was the beginning and the rise of the first African Church."<sup>19</sup>

This was the first African Church in Philadelphia, but independent Baptist Churches had been established in Savannah, Georgia and Petersburg, Virginia, prior to this date."<sup>20</sup>

On March 26, 1796, the church was incorporated as the "African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas." On October 21, 1794, Absalom Jones accepted the call to become its pastor. Allen, and his followers, planned to form an African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Free African Society did not close its doors in 1794. It continued as a separate organization for several years. It did not serve the purpose that it had originally. It became the training ground for the leadership of two church organizations. It taught lessons of thrift, sobriety, industry, and higher virtues to a select group of the Black population.<sup>21</sup> Through the efforts and commitment of the Free African Society, the door was open to create a larger cooperative that would serve larger numbers of the black population.

#### Historical Background in AME Church

The black brethens realized that uniting together to achieve growth and security was their only chance of

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<sup>19</sup>Op. Cit., p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>Op. Cit., p. 69

<sup>21</sup>Op. Cit., p. 73.

survival. Some recognized that growth would inevitably encompass intellectual expansion. However, a dispute did arise between ignorance and knowledge within the church. During this time, no provisions had been previously made for the education of the black community. At the Philadelphia conference of 1842 this issue was presented by D. A. Payne.

It was first resolved that the elders and deacons would make every effort to "cultivate" and "increase" the minister's store of knowledge. Bishop Morris Brown, pastor of Bethel Church, can best be summed as the following:

"The great literary advantages which the rising generation enjoys require more than ordinary intelligence in the ministry that may be called to instruct them; and, whereas, our excellent discipline cannot be fully executed, nor our present plans of improvement fully consummated without an intelligent ministry, and still more, whereas, the word of God requires that the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they (the people) should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Host; therefore, etc..."<sup>22</sup>

This marked only the beginning of a cooperative effort for the church to start educating its people. Sunday School teaching grew by great proportions, but the largest work was being done in Philadelphia. This work was under the care and supervision of Bishop Morris Brown, at Bethel Church.

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<sup>22</sup>Op. Cit., p. 141.

The growth of any community depends on communication. The "Christian Recorder", established on July 1, 1852, was used to express the opinions, wants, and desires of the General Conference. This weekly sheet was first edited by Reverend M. M. Clark. The first issue featured short editorials, obituaries, and two pieces of poetry. "The Dying Christian," written by Frances E. Watkins was one of the first poems published. An excerpt is as follows:

#### THE DYING CHRISTIAN

The light was faintly streaming  
 within a darken'd room,  
 Where a woman, faint and feebly,  
 was sinking to the tomb.

The silver cord was loosened -  
 we know that she must die -  
 We read the mournful token,  
 In the dimness of her eye.

We read in the radiance  
 That lit her pallid cheek,  
 And the quivering of her feeble lip,  
 Too faint with joys to speak.

And in the thoughts of life and fire,  
 Learn'd from God's encamping band,  
 Her words seem'd like a holy lyre  
 Tun'd in the spirit land.

We read it in the glorious spark,  
 Of strange, unearthly light,  
 That ever and ever would start  
 The dimness from her sight.

Meet, o meet me in the kingdom;  
 Said our lov'd and dying one,  
 I long to be with Jesus,  
 I am on my journey home.

Like a child oppressed with slumber,  
 She calmly sank to rest,  
 With her trust in her Redeemer,  
 While reposing on his breast.

She faded from our vision,  
 Like a thing of love and light,  
 But we feel she lives forever,  
 A spirit pure and bright."<sup>23</sup>

A host of writers along with letters sent to the conference were published. Years later, the Christian Recorder was expanded and continued to be the voice of the AME Church. The "Church Magazine", established in 1841 was being published quarterly during the time.

With the achievements of Sunday School teachings, programs, and a weekly paper, the next goal for the African Methodist Episcopal Church was the establishing of high schools and inevitably institutions for higher learning, namely, colleges. On March 10, 1863, Bishop D. A. Payne purchased property that had been previously used by the Methodist before the war, for Wilberforce University located in Wilberforce, Ohio. On January 5, 1881, the ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the State of Georgia, established Morris Brown University presently Morris Brown College. Allen University located in the City of Columbia, founded in 1870 was founded during the Columbia District meeting. Paul Quinn College was established in 1881. It is located in Waco, Texas.

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<sup>23</sup>Op. Cit., p. 303.

Kittrell College, founded February 7, 1886, is located in Kittrell, North Carolina. Edward Waters College, was founded in 1883, in Jacksonville, Florida, Western University, was founded on October 18, 1877, in Quindaro, Kansas, Shorter College, located in Little Rock, Arkansas, was founded in May 1886. Campbell College, at Jackson, Mississippi, was organized in 1887. Payne University, located in Selma, Dallas County, was established in 1889. Turner Normal College, founded in 1885, at Shelbyville, Tennessee. Payne Institute, founded in 1888, Southwest of Macon, Georgia. Lampton College, founded in 1889, located in South Carolina. Bethel College located near Montgomery, Alabama, Payne Theological Seminary located in Wilberforce, Ohio was founded in 1890. Last but not least is Flipper Key Davis College located at Tullahassel, Okla. It was established in 1917. The Missionary Department maintains schools at Port au Prince, Haiti, Collymore Rock, Barbabas, Georgetown, British Guiana, Para Maribo, Dutch Guiana, Sierra Leone and Liberia, West Africa, and Evaton, South Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Bishop F. H. Talbot 6th Episcopal District

The purpose of this interview was to ascertain what self-help cooperative programs Bishop Talbot was planning

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<sup>24</sup>Daniel A. Payne, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, vol. 2, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968: reprint ed), p. 369.

for the Sixth Episcopal District. I wanted to find out how the Bishop felt about organizing a food co-op in the local church and on a district level. I limited my question to what I considered was pertinent to this information. While he was very gracious in granting the interview, during the interview, no time limit was set by Bishop Talbot. The interviewer realized that the Bishop was a very busy man judging from the people who were waiting in his office to see him. It was my endeavor to make this interview as brief and to the point as possible.

Bishop Frederick Hilborn Talbot was elected the 90th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church at the 39th General Conference held in Dallas, Texas in 1972. Bishop Talbot is married to Dr. Sylvia Ross Talbot, who is our Episcopal Supervisor. Bishop Talbot was assigned to the 6th Episcopal District in June, 1980.

Bishop Frederick Hilborn Talbot  
 Chief Pastor of 6th Episcopal  
 District African Methodist  
 Episcopal Church  
 Atlanta, Georgia  
 March 16, 1982

#### Transcript of the Interview

Interviewer: Bishop Talbot, I noticed that in your administration of the 6th Episcopal District you have stressed self-help programs, such as the Allen group (cooperative group insurance



program) for Black people liberation.

Do you have any other specific program in mind?

Bishop: Self-help was demonstrated from the beginning of our Church. Richard Allen practiced and taught self reliance. He saw that Black people must rely on themselves for their economic potential. The philosophy of self-help is the main part of the life of the Church. The philosophy of self-help or self reliance unscore the dignity of our people. They must begin to rely on themselves and get rid of what I call dependency syndrome. The dependency syndrome is the act of having others do for us what we can do for ourselves.

Interviewer: What other types of self-help programs are you engaged in?

Bishop: We are developing a retreat center in Columbus, Georgia on 12 acres of land owned by the Church and adjoining St. Paul AME Church. Until now we have been using other people's retreat, but now we are developing our own. The remainder of the land will be used for agricultural purposes.

Interviewer: Would that be for commercial purposes?

Bishop: No, the members of the Church would work the land and share the produce.

Interviewer: Is that co-op farming?

Bishop: Yes, a number of people in the rural area is doing this already.

Interviewer: Since the AME Church is divided into Conferences and districts do you feel that a food co-op on the district level could work?

Bishop: Yes, since the Church is organized that way. That is a good idea, first, because of the small concise area, and second, it would be easy to supervise because it would be under one Presiding Elder and not crossing district lines.

Interviewer: We are in the process of organizing a food co-op at Ebenezer now.

Bishop: That is very good. Let me know if there is anything that I can help you with.

Interviewer: There is Bishop, but I will let you know later.

Bishop: Anytime.

Interviewer: Thank you, Bishop.

Bishop:           You are welcome.<sup>25</sup>

Bishop Talbot is concerned about Black people and their struggle for survival. He is willing to lend a helping hand to any cooperative venture that will help uplift Black people and their dignity.

### Reflections

The heritage of the AME Church is rich with examples of mutual aid and cooperation. When Richard Allen and the Black members of St. George Methodist Church walked out because of racial discrimination, they walked out on faith that a loving and kind God will help those who help themselves. They realized that survival depended on mutual aid for each other.

The Free African Society was the first cooperative effort of Black people in America. While this organization was organized by Blacks and for Blacks, whites were to hold the offices of secretary and treasurer in the organization. The whites must have used these offices to control the organization. There is no record to indicate this was the case. However, when the group decided to vote on what church it would be affiliated with (Methodist or Episcopalian) the majority voted to affiliate itself with the Episcopalian Church, the denomination of the white

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<sup>25</sup>Bishop F. H. Talbot, Interview held at his office, Atlanta, Georgia, March, 1982.

brethens. Allen resigned, and set his course in organizing an independent Black Methodist Church.

The organizing of our schools and colleges were based on the cooperative principles. Bishop Talbot is in full accord that Blacks must do for themselves where they have been relying on others to do for them.

The spirit of Richard Allen still leads and guides the AME Churches. Allen built the Church on the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and Christ as our Redeemer. There is no better foundation in all of God's universe.

CHAPTER IV  
THE NEED FOR A COOPERATIVE VENTURE  
IN EBENEZER AME CHURCH

Introduction

The most important consideration in organizing a food co-op would be, whether there is a need for a food co-op. Food is a basic need for people. We have to eat in order to live. Since food is one of the sustaining forces of life, one might answer that there is a need for a food co-op. It is not as simple as that, it is one thing to show a need for food, but it is another thing to show a need for a food co-op.

The most compelling reason for a food co-op is, we must eat and buy food, then why not buy it from your own food co-op at a savings? The profit from the purchase of food can be used for an additional benefit to the participants. The second reason for organizing a food co-op is those who can benefit most from the use of a food co-op. It is obvious that the people who are on a fixed income and the people who are making low wages would benefit most from a food co-op.

The demographic profile of Ebenezer AME Church membership shows that fifty-three (53) percent of the members depend on some form of government assistance for their living. Where twenty-five (25) percent of the

members are on a fixed income and thirty-six (36) percent of the members make \$600.00 or less a month. A total of sixty-one (61) percent of the members are on a fixed income or make less than \$600 a month. Ebenezer AME Church could benefit greatly from a well organized and well run food co-op.

### A Brief History of Ebenezer

#### AME Church

Ebenezer AME Church is located in the City of Greensboro, Greene County, Georgia, about 80 miles east of Atlanta, Georgia. The present population is estimated to be 3,000 people as of April, 1982.

Two years after Black people were freed from slavery, the Church was organized in 1867 by a few Black men and women.

Among the first members was a Black preacher (name unknown) who served as pastor until the annual conference convened in Macon, Georgia on March 12, 1868. The Bishop sent an ordained minister (name unknown) to be Ebenezer's second pastor. He was able to add many converts to the membership and secure a building for holding service.

A white gentlemen, named William Bryant, deeded the African Methodist Episcopal Church one acre of land at its present location known as Land Creed, dated April 30, 1871. This deed is recorded in Book I page 395.

The first building was frame until it was bricked veneered in the early fifties by Reverend R. L. Coachman.

Ebenezer has always played an important part in the educational and the religious life of the Black community of Greensboro. The first black school in Greensboro was held at Ebenezer. This year the church will celebrate its 115th anniversary. It is continuing working to serve God and the black community of Greene County.

#### Political Conditions of Black

#### People in Greensboro, Georgia

The City of Greensboro has a Mayor-Council form of government. They have a Mayor and five Councilmen. Four Councilmen are caucasian and one is Black. Most small Georgia towns have no black representation at all.

The purpose of this interview with Mr. William Breeding is to find out the existing political conditions of Blacks in Greensboro and Greene County. Mr. Breeding is a professional educator. He now serves as the Principal of Greensboro Elementary School, President of the Greene County NAACP, President of Greensboro Improvement Association, Chairman of Greensboro Community Action group. He is also a member of the Governor's State Health Coordinating Council. Mr. Breeding is very knowledgeable about the political, social, medical, and educational conditions of Black people in Greene County.

Mr. Breeding has lived in Greensboro, Georgia for over twenty years. He received his bachelor's degree from Clark College. A six year degree in Administration from Atlanta University and further post-graduate studies at the University of Georgia.

Mr. William Breeding

President of Greene County NAACP

Greensboro, Georgia

March 28, 1982

Interviewer: Reverend R. L. Evans

Interviewer: Mr. Breeding as President of the NAACP of Greene County, what are the greatest needs of Black people in Greene County?

Mr. Breeding: I see political action movement as the most important need of Blacks in Greene County.

Interviewer: What kind of political action are you talking about?

Mr. Breeding: Voter registration and participation. We are going to start a drive in May for sixty days.

Interviewer: What percentage of the total registered voters in Greene County are black?

Mr. Breeding: The current registration is 58 percent white and 42 percent black.



Interviewer: What percentage of the population is black in Greensboro?

Mr. Breeding: Blacks make up 52 percent of the population in Greensboro and 52 percent in the County. Blacks make up the majority of the population.

Interviewer: What percentage of elected officials is there in City and County government?

Mr. Breeding: Blacks have 20 percent of the elected officers in Greene County: one City Councilman, one on the School Board of Education, and one County Commissioner. Each of these groups has five members.

Interviewer: How do you account for one black out of a group of five officials - especially with a black majority in Greensboro and Greene County?

Mr. Breeding: By City and County wide elections, also by gerrymandering, even though a person must run either citywide or countywide he/she must run from the district he/she lives in.

Interviewer: This is not equitable.

Mr. Breeding: I know that, we are working to change the situation.

Interviewer: How is race relations in the county?

Mr. Breeding: Good.<sup>1</sup>

This ended the section of the interview with Mr. Breeding dealing with the political conditions of Blacks in Greensboro and Greene County. The interviewer has been pastoring in Greensboro for the last two years and I disagree with Mr. Breeding. The reason why race relations are good in Greene County is because the Blacks in the County really have not challenged the white man's paternal ideas of keeping Blacks in their places. They have given the Blacks a piece of the pie but not enough to leave a taste in their mouths.

This interview will continue when the medical care of Blacks in Greene County is examined.

#### Economic Conditions of Ebenezer's

##### Membership

On January 3, 1982, a questionnaire was completed by 53 members of Ebenezer AME Church. The total membership is 89 people. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information primarily about the member's financial, educational, general and governmental assistance. It also was conducted to determine if there is a need for a food co-op based on the following information. Here are the questions that were asked.

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. William Breeding, Interview Held in His Home, Greensboro, Georgia, March, 1982.

1. How long have you been a member of a church?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
a. 0-1 year	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
b. 2-10 years	<u>21</u>	<u>39</u>
c. 11-50 years	<u>24</u>	<u>46</u>
d. 50 years	<u>8</u>	<u>15</u>

2. How many is in your family?

a. 1.	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
b. 2.	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
c. 3.	<u>17</u>	<u>32</u>
d. 4 or more	<u>28</u>	<u>46</u>

3. What is your monthly income?

a. \$0.00-\$300	<u>15</u>	<u>29</u>
b. \$301-\$600	<u>19</u>	<u>36</u>
c. \$601-\$1000	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>
d. \$1000-or more	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>

4. Does anyone in your family receive a Basic Educational Opportunity Grant?

a. Yes	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>
b. No	<u>43</u>	<u>82</u>

5. Does your family receive food stamps?

a. Yes	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>
b. No	<u>47</u>	<u>89</u>

6. Do you or your family receive aid for dependent children?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
a. Yes	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
b. No	<u>51</u>	<u>96</u>

7. Do you or your family receive Medicare?

a. Yes	<u>13</u>	<u>25</u>
b. No	<u>40</u>	<u>75</u>

8. Do you or your family receive Medicaid?

a. Yes	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
b. No	<u>51</u>	<u>96</u>

9. Do you receive social security.

a. Yes	<u>11</u>	<u>21</u>
b. No	<u>42</u>	<u>79</u>

10. How far did you go in school?

a. 1-6 years	<u>7</u>	<u>14</u>
b. 7-10 years	<u>15</u>	<u>28</u>
c. 11-12 years	<u>25</u>	<u>46</u>
d. Other	<u>6</u>	<u>12</u>

11. What is your age?

a. 0-18	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
b. 19-30	<u>20</u>	<u>37</u>
c. 31-65	<u>20</u>	<u>37</u>
d. 65 and over	<u>12</u>	<u>23</u>

A total of 63 percent of the members at Ebenezer AME Church who answered the questionnaire said that their income was less than \$600 a month, these were members 19 years and older. This questionnaire will be examined again, in the next two sections. Educational conditions and dependence on government aid to Ebenezer's membership shall be discussed.

#### Educational Conditions of Ebenezer's Membership

The educational conditions of Ebenezer's membership are very encouraging. At the present there are three members of the church enrolled in college. All of the minor school age members are attending school.

The data on question number ten (10) shows the following: fourteen (14) percent of the members ended their education at the sixth grade or under. Twenty-eight (28) percent of them stopped between the seventh and tenth grades. Forty-six (46) percent of them completed grades then through twelve, while twelve (12) percent of them went to schools beyond high school.

#### Dependence on Government Aid by Ebenezer's Membership

Questions four through nine dealt with government programs that assist people in one form or another. The

data shows the following: eighteen (18) percent of the families received Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (federal funded program that helps underprivileged students). Eleven (11) percent of the families received food stamps, four (4) percent of the families receive aid to dependent children, twenty-five (25) percent of the families receive Medicare, four (4) percent of the families receive Medicaid, twenty-one (21) percent receive social security.

By analyzing this data a total of fifty-three (53) percent of the membership of Ebenezer receive some form of government assistance for their living. This within itself exemplifies a definite need for a food cooperative venture. They will become more dependent on themselves and less on the government.

Medical Conditions of Black People  
in Greene County, Georgia

The medical conditions in Greene County are very poor for Blacks and whites alike. Mimmie G. Boswell Hospital, the only hospital in the county is threatened to close down because of the lack of funds. The present hospital was built in 1949, with a grant from the Boswell Foundation, of \$500,000. In October of 1951, the Boswell Foundation gave the hospital, which was governed then by a Hospital Authority, another \$627,000 dollars endowment, to help with the expense of the

hospital. The hospital has not updated its basic equipment in the last thirty-two years.

The financial problems of the hospital come from not being able to treat serious illness because of untrained personnel and not enough doctors for the twelve thousand people in Greene County. About sixty percent of the patients are sent outside of the county for further medical treatment. The other problem is that the County Commissioners have not given the hospital any funds since it opened.

The quality of medical treatment of the residents of Greene County has a lot to be desired. There are only four doctors and two dentists in the county. There are no black health care providers for approximately 6,000 blacks.

On March 1, 1982, a meeting was held at Greensboro High School for the purpose of finding out how the hospital could be saved. Eight hundred residents of Greene County were in attendance. The need for money was thoroughly discussed. The Boswell Foundation has promised a two for one matching grant up to one million dollars. It was decided that the people of Greene County would try to raise the five hundred thousand dollars. The residents will need the five hundred thousand dollars to receive the full grant. Also a questionnaire was completed by each person present, they were asked questions

as to how they were going to improve their health care.

The participants on the Strategic Committee were William T. McKettrick, Executive Director of the hospital, Johnny Vaughn, Planner East Central Georgia Healty Systems Agency, Inc., William Breeding, member of the State Health Coordinating Council. The following doctors were present: Lee Parker, William H. Rhodes, H. A. Thornton, and Leo J. Wade. There were no members of the County Commission present.

The interview with Mr. Breeding, member of the State Health Coordinating Council, continues as follows:

Interviewer: Mr. Breeding, you were on the committee to save the hospital, what has been done to raise the five hundred thousand dollars?

Mr. Breeding: The Hospital Authority and the Committee have asked the County Commissioners to sign a contract for fifty years to help pay the expenses of the hospital. They may raise the property millage rate from two mils to seven mils. If they did, we would have the five hundred thousand dollars for the matching funds.

Interviewer: Has the committee heard from the Commissioners?



Mr. Breeding: No, not as yet, they say that their attorney is studying the matter.

Interviewer: Do you think that they will raise the taxes or have a referendum?

Mr. Breeding: I am sure they will have a referendum and let the voters decide about the taxes.

Interviewer: Mr. Breeding what if anything is being done to get a black doctor for Greene County?

Mr. Breeding: You know on the questionnaire we asked you to fill out, some of the black people requested a black doctor and we are working on that matter.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Mr. Breeding: You are welcome.<sup>2</sup>

Since the interview with Mr. Breeding all of the County Commissioners have been recalled by the voters of the County. It is my opinion that the next County Commissioners will be more responsive to the medical needs of Greene County residents.

#### Summary

There are too many members of Ebenezer AME Church suffering from what Bishop Talbot calls "dependency syndrome". They have been depending on Government hand-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

out for so long that they feel they can not make it without them. The reason for organizing a cooperative venture in the church is to combat this type of mentality.

There is a dire need for self-help programs among Black people. The present administration in Washington has cut back on social programs that effect the poor and the Blacks. The members have the resource and the know how if they cooperate to reduce the level of government dependency.

Therefore the need is great for organizing a food co-op at Ebenezer AME Church.

CHAPTER V  
A DESIGN FOR ORGANIZING A FOOD CO-OP  
IN EBENEZER AME CHURCH

Introduction

In the second chapter, cooperative venture was viewed from a theological prospective. If a church owned cooperative venture is going to be a part of God's Church, then it must have a theological undergirding based in scripture. If a co-op is going to be part of the Church's mission in the world, then it must adhere to Christian principles. Chapter three deals with the historical background of cooperative ventures in the founding of the AME Church. Richard Allen and Abalom Jones used the cooperative principle when they founded the Free African Society.

Chapter four shows the need for a cooperative venture which deals with the Church in particular and the surrounding community in general at Ebenezer AME Church.

In this chapter a rationale derived from that study will be used as the basis for organizing a cooperative venture built on theological principles. Seven steps will illustrate this process. They are preparation for organizing a Food Co-op, Church organization of a Food Co-op, Government Regulations, suppliers, networking, profits, reviews, and evaluations.

### Preparation for Organizing a Food Co-Op

It goes without saying that the better the preparation for organizing a food co-op the better the chances it will succeed. The preliminary planning should be done very carefully. In terms of time, preparation may take several months to several years. The following factors must be considered in preparing to organize a food co-op.

First, organizing a food co-op starts with the minister having a clear idea in his/her mind of what a food co-op is. The minister must have some idea how a food co-op works, the advantages and disadvantages of operating a co-op, its legal requirements, and benefits that can be derived from participating in a co-op.

Secondly, the minister must be determined to see his/her plan through from beginning to end. It is easy for people to agree with a plan based on a good idea and forget about it in the next few minutes. The minister must be persistent in his/her belief, that a food co-op can work and be a great benefit to the church mission and members. If you don't succeed at first, then try and try again until the food co-op is organized.

Thirdly, it is impossible to organize anything about which you have no knowledge. The organizer must have some knowledge of a food co-op. That is, he must know what a food co-op is, how it works, the laws governing it, possible suppliers, and how to work with people. This

knowledge may either come from experience, resource people, or research. This point will be discussed in the section on Preliminary Research.

Fourthly, the people must trust the minister/organizer. The minister must understand that trust does not come by virtue of one's position, it must be earned over a period of time. If there is no trust between the minister and the people then the minister is wasting his/her time in trying to organize a food co-op.

H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. states, that Charles V. Hamilton points to the things that he believes give the contemporary black preacher a negative image. He points out three major areas of conflict. They are personal dissension, morals, and church property. He states that the most serious criticisms of the black preachers are materialism, anti-intellectualism, and authoritarianism, in terms of leadership styles and political noninvolvement.<sup>1</sup>

The above are some of the things which give a minister a negative image. He/she should be on guard against them from the very first day. A trusting relationship comes with time. The best way to get people to trust you is for you to show a genuine interest in them as an individual, brother or sister in Christ Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Beecher, Jr., Images of the Black Preacher, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1977), p. 50.

If the organizer is going to bring an idea that is foreign to the people, the first thing that the people are going to look at is the organizer's creditability. The first question they will ask is whether he/she practices what he/she preaches. They want to know whether he/she is interested in their well being or is this a scheme to enrich the organizer.

### Preliminary Research

To increase the minister's knowledge, he/she must undertake some preliminary research. The minister should investigate demographic and sociological data. The information derived from this data describes trends in population, social groups, political conditions, and economic factors in the community. In order for a food co-op to survive, (1) there must be a commitment on the part of its members that they will purchase food on a regular basis and (2) that a continuing process of education among staff, members and community be started from its inception.

Information about a food co-op can be obtained from any number of sources. To name a few of them:

- (1) There is a large number of books in print  
that deal with all aspects of a food co-op.
- (2) The Cooperative League of the USA in Washington, D.C. publishes a number of books and pamphlets, that can be purchased for a small fee.

- (3) The U.S. Department of Agriculture publishes information about food stamp laws, rules, and regulations governing them.
- (4) Georgia Department of Agriculture sets the health code with which the food co-op must comply if they do business in the state.
- (5) Georgia Consumer Protection Agency sets the standards for business organization's handling of other people's money.

#### Start to Organize

After preparations have been planned carefully, a decision must be made concerning the time to start organizing. The organizing process should begin with an attitudinal test given to the membership of Ebenezer AME Church to determine the level of awareness about a food co-op. Next, start a series of classes on Sundays after 11:00 o'clock service, and 7:30 P.M. Wednesday evenings during the month of January 1982. The classes consisted of lectures and discussions.

The subjects of the classes are as follows:

- 1. A Brief History of Cooperative
- 2. Cooperative Ventures and Christian Stewardship
- 3. Cooperative Ventures and the Wholistic Mission of the Church
- 4. Why a Food Co-Op
- 5. Why Own Your Own Business
- 6. Your Part in a Food Co-Op

## 7. Present Benefits for You and Others

## 8. Future Benefits for You and Others

The rationale behind this approach is first to get the laity involved in the process, and giving them the chance to have input in the process. Secondly, to show them the relationship between a food co-op and the mission of the church. Finally, the member will be retested after the last class. The information will be reviewed and evaluated and the results will be analyzed in Chapter Six.

### Types of Structure

The State of Georgia makes up the Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Sixth Episcopal District is subdivided into six conferences. Each conference is further divided into three to five districts, and each district covers a geographical area in the State.

The Athens district is located in Northeast Georgia which include the following counties: Taliaferro, Wilkes, Greene, Clarke, Oglethorpe, Elbert, and Forsyth. The Athens district is the smallest district in the Sixth Episcopal District per membership and geographical area. Ebenezer AME Church is located in Greene County, Greensboro, Georgia. The Athens district is the ideal place to start a pilot program for a food cooperative because of its size in membership and geographical area.



The structure of a food co-op should be of such that the local co-op maintains control over its affairs, but at the same time be affiliated with a District Council. The District Council should be a single Presiding Elder district for the following reasons:

- (1) The ministers on the district know and work with each other.
- (2) The churches have been associated with each other over a long period of time.
- (3) The Presiding Elder has the responsibility for leadership and supervision of the district.

If other churches were included outside a Presiding Elder's district, then there could be a conflict of interest.

#### District Conference

The District Council will meet at the District Conference. It is the responsibility of the District Conference, according to the Book of Discipline of the AME Church, to search out ways and means to make the church more prosperous financially.<sup>2</sup> The Connectional Church encourages organizing cooperative ventures such as credit unions and food co-op in the local church.

#### District Council

The District Council should act as the Control Center of the co-ops. Each co-op should furnish the Council

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<sup>2</sup>The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1980 ed 42.

with the number of members, gross income, and other pertinent information that can be used for research development and planning.

The District Council should have a fourfold function in relationship with the co-ops. First, the cooperative principles should be covered thoroughly in a required course at the District Conference. This course should deal with the practical as well as the theological perspective about co-ops. Ministers who are pastoring should be motivated to set up co-ops in their local churches and communities. The District Council should act as a consultant in the development of these co-ops. The requirements for those ministers who are pastoring should be to do the preliminary planning with the help of the District staff in the organization of a co-op.

Secondly, the District Council should act as a clearinghouse for all the co-ops, receiving and passing on information in private correspondence or by newsletter. The newsletter should cover articles of mutual concern, such as bookkeeping, stock control, a list of suppliers in an area, taxes (income and sales), organizing tactics that have been used by successful co-ops, and highlights of successful co-ops, for all the co-ops.

Thirdly, the District Council should keep up with the Food Brokerage Business. This means that the Food Brokerage houses know when the prices of certain items are

going up, sometimes as much as a year to six months before they go up and how high they will go. This type of information would be very useful to a co-op. The Council should keep up with all trends such as bad weather conditions, shortages, labor problems, etc., that would have effect on prices.

#### Membership

The membership should have the final authority in the affairs of the food co-op. They should meet either quarterly, semi-annually or annually. They should elect the Board of Directors as prescribed in the Constitution and By-Laws. Each member should have only one vote regardless of his/her investment in the food co-op.

#### Board of Directors

The members of the Board appointed should be persons who are in keeping with the spirit and the letter of the co-op principles. The composition of the Board should be 1/2 church members and 1/2 community. The Board should set the polity of the co-op.

#### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee should be composed of 1/4 of the Board of Directors. They should set policy in the interim of the Director's meeting.

#### Director

The Director should be the Chief Executive officer in the day to day operation of the co-op. He should be

bonded with at least \$25,000. He should co-sign all checks with the manager.

#### Manager

The manager should oversee the actual operation of the co-op. He should order all supplies and pay for them by check. No check should be made out to cash. He should co-sign the checks with the Director. He should supervise all personnel. The manager should set the prices of all items, with the approval of the director.

#### Buyers

The buyers should make up all supply orders and order them with the approval of the manager.

#### Transportation

The transportation department should have the responsibility for picking up all supplies which are not delivered to the co-op and also getting them to the co-op members who cannot get to the co-op because of age or physical disability. The transportation department should make suggestions to the Director about the type of truck it needs and whether it is to be leased or purchased.

#### Volunteer Stock Clerk

The stock clerk should keep the stock in an orderly manner and keep an accurate inventory account. They should pass all inventory information on to the buyers.

Volunteer Cashier

The cashier is the only one who should take in the money for purchases. The cashier should pass the money on to the manager.

Volunteer Butcher

The butcher should cut all meats and package it before it is sold to the buyers.

Finally, each one of these positions from the Director on down should be training positions. They should give a person both training and practical experience that he or she may apply to the world of work. As time passes and the co-op needs full time help, then the ones who have given their time freely should be considered first.

Laity

It is the intent that the laity will eventually take over full responsibility for operating the co-op. While the minister should be the initiator in starting the co-op, he should involve the laity in the process every step so that he can take less and less of the responsibility for its operation.

Source of Financing

Financing is the most critical problem in organizing a co-op. Where do you get financing? How do you get the financing? These are types of questions that must be answered in the planning stage. Since financing is the major hurdle that has to be leaped, then there has to be some plan in order to raise finance.

There are four major sources of finance that is opened to a church co-op: (1) membership dues, (2) gifts from private individuals, (3) have members pay for their purchases in advance with a small surcharge added to their bill, and (4) sell shares and pay a small dividend on the shared once the co-op starts making money. Financing will probably be the first problem that the co-op will have to overcome.

#### Church Organization of Food Co-Op

Before the black preacher can be effective in organizing a food co-op, certain things must be clear in his/her own mind. First, he must recognize himself as a change agent. A change agent is a person who brings about planned social change in a community.<sup>3</sup> He must provide the leadership for the food co-op. This leadership can be done most effectively by educating the people about the need for a food co-op. Secondly, he must be willing to work very closely with supporting groups outside the church and in the community. Thirdly, the black preacher must also see himself as an innovator. He must plan and bring fresh ideas such as day-care centers for the young and the elderly and food co-ops, etc., before the church membership.

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<sup>3</sup>Lyle E. Schaller, The Change Agent, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 40.

The black preacher must see the church as the extended family, that is, his pastoring must extend beyond the walls of the church and reach out into the community because Christ demanded the minister to go to the highways and byways and bid people to come to him.

Finally, the black preachers should have a genuine love for the poor, the disposed, the unwanted, and the people of low degree. He must be able to walk a mile in their shoes and see the world through their eyes. He must be willing to run the risk of protecting them at the cost of his charge, his family, and his life. The people in the community are all God's children. Therefore, it is the minister's job to administer to their needs.

Surely, the black preacher should take the leading role in the formation of a food co-op. The preacher should use the organizational chart to place people in positions that will take advantage of their expertise and their backgrounds. (See organizational chart in the Appendix.)

#### Definition of Concepts and Terms

Enabler - a person who sets in motion planned social change or change the direction of unplanned change.

Innovator - Black preacher as innovator is the person who (1) should be willing to take

the risk to bring about change in any organization or institution, (2) should focus on the new and not on the old, (3) should tend to avoid some of the ideological problems that often produce a polarizing paralysis that halts all efforts at change from within and (4) should be open to change.

Organizer - a person who brings others together in a common group for a common cause.

One who takes the blame for its failure and no credit for the group success.

#### Community Participation

The Black Church must take very seriously Christ's edit that He came not in the world to save the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. So, the church should see the needs of those who are without, and show their love and concern is one way of reaching them. A food co-op should be free to all that want to join. For that has always been the ways of the church.

#### Membership Participation

The food co-op should charge interested persons a small membership fee to join. This fee should be used in order to help start the co-op and should be good for a certain period of time, such as three (3) months, six (6)



months or one (1) year. Each member should have as much input as any other member in the operation of the food co-op.

#### Political Implications

Any time a group of people come together under a common interest, there are always political implications. So, the leaders of a co-op should be aware of this and always be on the vigilant against unjust laws that will curb the effectiveness of a co-op. They should also encourage favorable laws. The co-op should be aware of the candidates for political office and support the best ones in their interest and work to defeat the ones who are not in their best interest.

#### Theological Reflection

Living in a country with a capitalistic economy, where one man takes advantage of his brother is the rule rather than the exception. One is reminded of Gen. 4:9 - "And the Lord saith unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"<sup>4</sup> Then Cain's question to God takes on a new relevance for the Black Church. Are we our brother's keeper? The Church must answer this question in light of St. Luke 4:18 when Christ said "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because

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<sup>4</sup>Genesis 4:9

he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."<sup>5</sup>

Christ came into the world to minister to the total man. He did not only proclaim the Good News about the saving grace of God the Father. But, he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. Whatever the need was, he administered to it.

It might be said that Christ started the first food co-op on the shores of Galilee, when He fed five-thousand people off of two little fishes and five loaves of bread. For in that one event, all principles of a food co-op were there. First, it was the sharing of the fish and bread by the young boy. So you see, by the boy sharing, a miracle took place. In a co-op, the people must share of their time and money and through the miracle of cooperation, great things can be accomplished.

Secondly, the church might not be able to pray over a few fishes and a few loaves of bread, but if they work together in the spirit of cooperation and Christian love, they will not only be able to feed five thousand but five

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<sup>5</sup>Luke 4:18.

hundred thousand. For it was Christ that said, "These things I do, but much more greater things that you can do".

Therefore, the church must begin to take its stewardship very serious. For we are our brother's keeper, and it is our job to take care of the poor, to feed the hungry, and to love one another. Most of all, it becomes our task to work in the kingdom building ventures, for this is what Jesus Christ did and we should go and do likewise.

#### Government Regulations

Contrary to popular belief, co-op laws have been on the books since 1916, dealing with such cooperative ventures as food co-ops and credit unions in the United States. Through the years, the Congress of the United States has passed laws to give co-op favorable tax status. The U.S.A. founded the Cooperative League in 1918. It served to bring together consumers with the interest of producers, urban and rural cooperatives and people to stand on common ground.

Some co-ops such as Federal Credit Union and Co-op Insurance groups are very closely regulated by the Federal or State governments. A food co-op is not so closely regulated any more than a food store in a community.

I will go through the legal procedures that it will take to set up a food co-op as it relates to the different

government agencies that regulate a food co-op. I will stop here to point out that there are no Federal laws to regulate a food co-op other than the Federal Income Tax laws and Food Stamp laws. Therefore, a food co-op is mostly regulated by state agencies.

#### Charter - Non Profit

The best way to set up a food co-op is to get it set up as a non-profit organization. While this step is not necessary, it is highly desirable. One reason for this is to limit liability and another reason is to take advantage of a more favorable tax status. The Cooperative League of the USA will be called CLUSA. The CLUSA publishes a number of books and pamphlets that will be helpful for anyone who wants to organize a food co-op. One of their books is entitled Time to Organize. It is a guide to incorporation, articles, model bylaws, and suggestions. I must point out that the services of a lawyer should be used at this step.

It must be pointed out that the steps that I have given might not necessarily come in the order given, but all of them are very important.

#### Business License

A business license should be obtained so there will be no legal confrontation later on. A business license can be obtained from the local government unit, such as city or county government.

### Sales Tax Laws

Every state in this country has some type of sales tax laws. Some states do not tax food but do tax other non-food items that are sold in grocery stores. While sales tax would bring in new revenue to the co-op, if they are not paid on time they can be used to close it down. So it is very important to point out that they be filed promptly and on time, preferably monthly.

### Building Code

The building should be selected with great care so that it will comply with the health laws in the local community. I will point out some of the building requirements of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. This is not to say that the basement of a church or education building cannot be used. They can if they meet the health code. A health inspector will be very reluctant to give a church a hard time, mainly because of its political power.

Listed below are some of Georgia's Health Building Codes:

- (1) The floors where food is sold should be concrete, tile, or some other material with a smooth surface so they can be easily cleaned.
- (2) Walls, ceilings and windows of the building shall be smoothed, and painted. The windows

should fit closely so as to prevent entrance of insects and rodents.

- (3) Doors and screens shall be at all doors and windows that open to the outside. They should be without holes and fitted tightly.
- (4) All rooms shall be adequately lighted and ventilated.
- (5) Storage area shall be adequate with sufficient space for all merchandise to be neatly arranged. It should be free of trash. All food should be stored at a minimum of 4 inches from the floor.
- (6) Outside premises shall be well drained, free of debris, and maintained in a clean condition. Adequate precautions shall be taken to eliminate insects and rodents.
- (7) Toilet and washroom should be adequate for personnel in a clean and sanitary condition. It should have hot and cold water with soap and powder for washing hands.
- (8) All utensils and equipments shall be so constructed and designed as to facilitate cleaning. No excessively corroded or rusty utensils shall not be used.

- (9) Rooms where food products are commercial process stores, or offered for sale shall not be used as living quarters.<sup>6</sup>

If there are any questions about the health code as it relates to a building, then call your local health inspector.

#### Bonding of Officers

In Georgia, co-ops where there is a membership fee, the officer that handles the money must be bonded for \$25,000. This is a requirement of the State Consumer Protection Agency. If this requirement is not in the State in which you're considering setting up a food co-op, it is a good idea to have the person who is handling the money to put up a surety bond. Many times, people have been ripped off by people they believe to be honest. If this happens, it would put the preacher in a very awkward position.

#### Food Stamp Law

It should be presumed that any organization of a food co-op would include the people who would need it the most, the ones in the lowest income bracket and who use food stamps as supplement.

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<sup>6</sup>Georgia Department of Agriculture, "Food Division Regulations," Circular, Chapter 40-7-1.

The Food Stamp program is offered by the Federal government. Therefore, it is a Federal violation to break it. It is a very serious violation of the Food Stamp Act and can result in severe penalties, ranging up to \$10,000 fine and a 5 year prison sentence, and disqualification of your food co-op from the program.

- (1) The cashier is the most important person in the food stamp program, because the cashier is the one who exchanges the stamps for food.
- (2) Food stamps can be used to buy food for human consumption in the home, except hot foods that are ready to eat.
- (3) Food stamps cannot be used to buy vitamins, food supplement, soap, washing powder and any other thing that is not made for human consumption.
- (4) The person who buys food stamps must have an identification card. It is against the law for a person to use someone else's card.
- (5) It is against the law to charge a person more for foods (one who is buying with food stamps) than for a person paying cash. A merchant cannot discriminate against a person buying with food stamps.
- (6) Food stamps cannot be used to buy alcoholic beverages and tobacco.



- (7) One cannot exchange food stamps for cash.
- (8) All authorized firms must be issued a Food Stamp Authorization Card before it can accept food stamps.<sup>7</sup>

### Supplier

#### Importance of Supplier and Kinds of Co-Ops

The suppliers are one of the most important links in the food co-op chain. The distributors should be selected with great care. The ones with the lowest prices would afford the greatest saving that can be passed on to the membership. This might not be possible at the start of the food co-op. You might have to deal with the closest food distribution to the location of the co-op.

- (1) Meats should be sold according to the refrigeration capacity. Meats can be bought cheaper by buying a whole hog or a whole cow. This entails having someone who knows how to cut meat.
- (2) Co-op ranching - a deal could be made with a ranch to buy all of the livestock and have it slaughtered at a house that is approved by the government.

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<sup>7</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, "Food and Nutrition Service," Circular, No. 18.

- (3) Co-op farming also has great possibilities for a food co-op. Certain land could be set aside for the growing of vegetables to be sold by a food co-op.
- (4) A food co-op should start with as many items as possible. This is very important, because this will make the food co-op very attractive or less attractive to the membership.

#### Lease Land or Purchased Land

The food co-op might want to buy or lease land to raise vegetables. This land could be farmed on a volunteer basis by co-op members who know something about farming. The same argument could be made for purchased land. It would not take over 10 to 20 acres of land to provide all the vegetables at a very cheap price that could be sold at the co-op.

#### Transportation

One way of getting suppliers to sell is to pick them up by truck. A truck could pick up vegetables in South Georgia and deliver them to every co-op between there and Atlanta. This is what I will call networking, which will be dealt with separately. Trucking is another important link in the chain of a co-op. Since vegetables are perishable, then they must be sold very shortly after picking. The truck can be leased rather than purchased. When it is more expensive to lease, then purchase it.

Warehouse

Warehouse would be needed to serve a network of co-ops because the biggest advantage would be buying in bulks. This way, a co-op could buy directly from the manufacturer, thereby cutting out the distributor. It could even buy only 10 to 20 fast moving items or a truck load of merchandise, and pass the savings on to the co-op.

Networking

Networking is the end product. This is the point where black people can invert their position from a consumer to a producer. Networking would be as many as one hundred or more co-ops. Therefore, there is a need for a central organization that could control all the co-ops in one area. This would have to be done very discretely. If the power structure had an idea as to what was going on, they they will make every effort to stop it. (See Appendix.)

Profit

Profit is a word that leaves a bad taste in the mouth of church folk, but that is what it is going to take in order to expand a co-op to a network. One argument that can be used for profit is that it is the profit that we give to the oppressors that provides him with the tools of oppression. The profit that we give to the oppressors provides him with decent houses, while we live in shanties.

It is the profit that we give to the oppressors that provides his children with a first class education that they take and use to further enslave our children. It is the profit that keeps the wheels of production going, and without it, black people are the first ones looking for a job. The co-op will not be robbing black people because we are going to provide the same goods and services with a savings to them.

### Jobs

What black people need are good jobs. A decent job and a decent salary can help parents to bring up their children. A footnote here: twenty years ago a group of Jews who all had community stores in the black community, banded together to start a warehouse to sell to the other Jews in the black community. Today, they own all the Big Apple and Food Giant stores in the Southeastern part of the United States. They provide thousand of jobs, the best ones to their people, of course. All of these stores are serviced from one central warehouse in Atlanta. What would be the possibility if the Black Church would take on this type of program?

### Growth

Growth is the main ingredient needed for a co-op to have any real impact on the black community. The co-op can expand to include clothes which have about 200%

mark up, watches and jewelry about 400% mark up. So the possibility for growth for a co-op is unlimited.

A central organization could be located in a metropolitan area that would serve all the outlying areas. It could keep up with co-ops as they are formed, so that it could help coordinate the networking.

#### Reserves

Reserves should be withheld from the profit so as to ensure growth.

#### Dividends

Every effort should be made to return some of the profit in terms of additional savings or in money, to the members.

#### Goals and Priorities

The co-op's goals and the time frame for meeting them should be realistic. There is no way to evaluate the progress and success of the co-op if there are no goals. Each goal should be planned in such a way that time is of the essence. The best way to evaluate progress is in increments of time.

Priority of these goals should be planned in such a way that the cart is not put before the horse. In other words, first things should be done first. A more detailed discussion will be covered in chapter six dealing with the implementation of this design.

The desired short term goals are stated as follows:

(1) Maximum funds needed to start operating, (2) The number of items that will be sold, (3) Recruiting enough members to take care of start-up expenses, (4) Training personnel before opening date, and (5) A distribution place where members can pick up their order.

The long term goals are stated as follows: (1)

Creating employment for some members, (2) Purchasing of land for farming, (3) Building a shopping center with a co-op supermarket, (4) Affiliating with other food co-ops, (5) Expanding the co-op to include clothing, credit union, and (6) cooperative housing.

The revising and updating of the goals should be evaluated at least once a year, so that they will be relevant to the church and the community that the co-op serves.

#### Use of Human Resources

Human resources are the greatest assets of the church and the co-op. They should be used to their fullest potential. Every effort should be made to place members in positions based on their education and experience.

Experts in cooperative venture should be used as consultants and speakers at seminars. Their expertise should be taken advantage of whenever a problem arises in the co-op.

### Accountability

Anytime you are handling someone elses money, they have a right to know how it was spent and for what. Accountability is one of the most important ingredients of a co-op. Bookkeeping should be set up in such a way that a fair and accurate accounting of all monies coming in and going out can be made at anytime. A full and accurate financial statement should be made at the annual membership convention.

Another area of accountability is in the area of staff. A clear line of responsibility and accountability must be drawn if confusion and friction are to be held to a minimum.

### Summary

In this chapter a design for organizing a food co-op in Ebenezer AME Church was proposed as a practical way of structuring a food co-op. In order to demonstrate this proposal, some insights in the preparation for organizing a food co-op, types of structure, church organization, Government Regulations, supplies, networking, profits, and goals and priorities were developed to show how these ingredients must be present in a design for organizing a church co-op.

The next chapter will offer an application of this design built on this new rationale.

CHAPTER VI  
IMPLEMENTATION OF FOOD CO-OP DESIGN  
IN EBENEZER AME CHURCH

Election of Officers

The first step in implementing a design for a food co-op at Ebenezer was the election of temporary officers. The election was held on February 6, 1982, and a president, secretary, and treasurer were elected. The Pastor serves as the director until the food co-op starts operation. These officers are to serve in the interim until the permanent officers (Board of Directors) can be elected. The election of permanent officers will take place after the completion of the membership drive.

All the members can participate in the election process. A co-op can not afford to deny any of its members a full and equal voice in its operation. A co-op is owned and operated by the members so everyone should have some input in the election of officers and its operations. The cooperative principle is based on membership participation which is most important to its operations. A person who felt that he had been frozen out of the election process is not likely to give his wholehearted support to the co-op. Membership participation is the cornerstone around which a co-op is built.



Planning Committee

A Planning Committee was appointed by the pastor, who will be the Chairman. Ten members were appointed to the committee. The Planning Committee would have the following duties and responsibilities.

1. To set an opening date and coordinate all activities in the time frame of the opening date.
2. To decide what items will be sold in the co-op.
3. To take orders from members and compose an order list for the wholesaler.
4. To provide transportation for picking up the orders from the wholesaler.
5. To make up a work assignment list and notify each member of his/her work assignment a week before time.
6. To act as coordinators of the membership drive.

The Planning Committee met on February 14, 1982 and took the following actions:

1. Opening date for the co-op to begin business will be on May 7th and 8th, 1982.
2. The items to be sold will be fresh produce, a limited number of can goods and washing powders.
3. All orders must be received by April 27, 1982.
4. Items will be ready for members to pick up on Friday afternoon, May 7, from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. and on Saturday, May 8, from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m.
5. All persons who will have work assignments on May 7th and 8th will be notified by May 2nd.

### State of Readiness

The organization and operation of a food co-op is a long term project. A state of readiness within the membership must be maintained. The writer proposes three ways that the state of readiness can be maintained among the members of the food co-op. The three ways are as follows: preaching, education, and action.

First, continuation of preaching on the sermonic theme (that we are our brother's keeper). The Biblical text comes from the Book of Genesis 4:9, when Cain asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper?"<sup>1</sup> Each member in the church and the food co-op must answer this question in the affirmative. Christians must know that we are our brother's keeper. We must share and care for our brother. Being our brother's keeper is the very heart of Christianity and Cooperative Ventures.

Secondly, the cooperative principle is built on education. Today's capitalist society stresses the acquisition of material things as the primary motive. The idea of sharing and caring for one's brother goes against the grain in a capitalist society. Education is the cornerstone of co-operative because people in our society are materialistically orientated instead of people orientated. The education process of a co-op should be able to educate people from

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<sup>1</sup>Genesis 4:9.

the acquisition of material things, and to the sharing of what we have to the benefit of all. The education process must be practical as well as theorized.

If the members of the co-op are going to do their jobs well, they must be trained. There will be courses in all phases of co-op from management to stock control. The training process will start immediately, because people only have confidence in what they are doing only if they know how.

Finally, the best way to maintain the state of readiness is by action. You can preach all the sermons and have all the training classes you want but if people don't see some action it will all be academic. There is a truism which states, "People learn from doing." The sooner the action starts the better. The writer is aware of the fact that people have a very limited attention span. After the members have come to a state of readiness, to delay action for an extended period would be counter productive.

#### Past and Future Projection

The organizing and operating of Ebenezer Food Co-Op is a long term project. A Milestone Chart will be used to reflect the past and project the future. An explanation of the chart follows:

ITEM 1: TEST-START LECTURES/DISCUSSION - The first test was administered on January 3, 1982. A series of eight lectures/discussions were given in the

month of January. A brief description of these lectures/discussions are as follows:

Lecture/Discussion Number One

Subject: "A Brief History of Cooperatives:

The cooperative's history started in Biblical times with the Prophet Malachi when he declared, "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house."<sup>2</sup> Also the members of the first church sold all they had and shared the profit with each according to their needs.<sup>3</sup>

The modern cooperative started in England and spreaded in the United States.

Lecture/Discussion Number Two

Subject: "Cooperative Ventures and Christian Stewardship"

Cooperative ventures are based on Christian principles for in 1 John we find, "But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him how does God's love abide in him?"<sup>4</sup>

The Christian's duty is to share what he has with others.

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<sup>2</sup>Malachi 3:10.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 2:44-45.

<sup>4</sup>John 3:17.

Lecture/Discussion Number Three

Subject: "Cooperative Ventures and the Wholistic Mission of the Church"

It is the Church's mission to look after all of man's needs, the physical as well as man's spiritual needs.

Lecture/Discussion Number Four

Subject: "Why a Food Co-Op?"

Food is a basic need for all creatures. In order for man to survive he must have food.

Lecture/Discussion Number Five

Subject: "Why Own Your Own Business"

There are certain benefits for the ownership of a business. First, items that one sells in his business he does not have to pay extra to obtain. Second, he buys from himself and not others, so whatever he spends enriches himself.

Lecture/Discussion Number Six

Subject: "Your Part in a Food Co-Op"

Cooperative means cooperating with others, for the benefit of all. If the person cooperates with others, the individual himself is enriched by sharing of his time and talents.

Lecture/Discussion Number Seven

Subject: "Present Benefits for You and Others"

One good thing about a food co-op is that persons who are members can benefit immediately. Their neighbor can also benefit if he is also a member.

#### Lecture/Discussion Number Eight

Subject: "Future Benefits for You and Others"

A food co-op can be a benefit for future generations. It would be a worthwhile legacy for today's members of Ebenezer to leave for their children.

- ITEM 2: RETEST - The members of Ebenezer were retested on February 7, 1982, the analysis of the result is covered in Chapter VII.
- ITEM 3: MEMBERSHIP DRIVE - Will be an ongoing operation. However, a special effort will be made from the middle of February until the fourth Sunday in April, 1982. Any person may join the food co-op regardless of race or religious affiliations. A cooperative must have the same open door policy as the Church, anyone that wants to join may.
- ITEM 4: STARTING DATE - Has been scheduled for May 7th and 8th of 1982.
- ITEM 5: TRAINING CLASSES - Will start in June 1982 on a continuing basis at least one week a month.
- ITEM 6: BUILDING START - Have ground breaking ceremony first week in October 1982. Building completion date estimated for first week in March 1983.

ITEM 7: ORGANIZING DISTRICT COUNCIL - Will be organized when the Athens District Conference meets in 1983. The planning for organizing the council shall be done with the consent of the Bishop and Presiding Elder. All the pastors on the District will be given a history and update of Ebenezer's Food Co-Op. This report will explain the organizing process and how to start a food co-op. It will include the successes and failures of Ebenezer's Co-Op.

The Presiding Elder should appoint members to the council who are going to start a food co-op in their local church. The purpose of the council would be planning and uniting the co-op's in wholesales, also buying as soon as it is feasible. The council should make the purchase for all the co-ops and distribute them from a central location point. The operation expense of the council should come from a small surcharge voted on by members of the council. The only ones that serve on the District Council other than the Presiding Elder should represent a food co-op.

ITEM 8: CO-OPERATIVE FARMING - Since Greene County is basically a rural county, the co-op will negotiate a lease of five acres of land for the purpose of growing fresh vegetables to begin selling in the summer

of 1983. The land will be worked and harvested on a cooperative basis by the members of the co-op.



# EBENEZER FOOD CO-OP

## MILESTONE CHART

SUBJECT: Projections of Food Co-Op

Item	DESCRIPTION/ ACTION	SCHEDULE													
		1982												1983	
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
1	TEST-START Lectures/Discussions	■													
2	RETEST														
3	MEMBERSHIP DRIVE														
4	STARTING DATE														
5	TRAINING CLASSES						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
6	BUILDING START/ COMPLETION														

MILESTONE CHART

SUBJECT: Projections of Food Co-Op

Item	DESCRIPTION/ ACTION	SCHEDULE													
		1983										1984			
		MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
6	BUILDING COMPLETION														
7	ORGANIZING DISTRICT COUNCIL														
8	CO-OPERATIVE FARMING														

Summary

The members at Ebenezer AME Church have made a beginning in organizing a food co-op. There is an old Chinese proverb which states, "That a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step". Ebenezer has taken the first step on the way to becoming self reliant. It is hard to say if they will make the whole trip, I do know that they will never make it if they don't start.

## CHAPTER VII

### EVALUATION/MODIFICATION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the first five chapters a design was presented for a church food co-op built on theological principles. In Chapter VI the design was set in motion in the context of Ebenezer AME Church in Greensboro, Georgia. In this chapter the evaluation of the design will be given. It is too early to evaluate the results from the praxiological aspects of the application, except for the two questionnaires.

#### The Evaluation Process

In order to evaluate the proposed design for organizing a church operated food co-op and the process leading to that design, an attitudinal questionnaire was given to the membership at Ebenezer. After eight lectures on different aspects of a church food co-op, the membership was again given the same questionnaire to complete. The results of each set of questionnaires will be analyzed in this chapter and modification to the design will be an effective tool. Each member was presented with the twenty-four questions listed in Appendix B. Each completed the questions before and after classes.

#### Analysis

Each member answered all twenty-four questions each time. It was the intent of the evaluator to design the questionnaire in such a way to hide the pertinent questions by including irrelevant ones.

The purpose of deliberately including these questions was to minimize what Edward Suchman calls the "placebo effect". According to Webster's Dictionary placebo is defined as a substance having no pharmacological effect but given to a patient or subject of an experiment who supposes it to be a medicine.<sup>1</sup> The Placebo Effect, Suchman explains as the following:

"In a blind test the subject does not know whether he is receiving the active drug, being evaluated, or the inactive placebo."<sup>2</sup>

There is always the temptation of people to give a response just to please the evaluator. Modell and Houde summarized the main features of the Placebo Effect in the following passage.

"It is a control device to prevent bias from influencing results. On the other hand, it rules out the effect of the hopes and anxieties of the patient by giving both the drug under investigation and a placebo of identical appearance in such a way that the subject does not know which he is receiving".<sup>3</sup>

Only the pertinent questions will be analyzed in this chapter. The questionnaire was administered the first time on January 3, 1982, and the second time on February

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<sup>1</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary, rev. ed. (1980), S.V., "Placebo".

<sup>2</sup>Edward A Suchman, Evaluative Research, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Modell, Raymond W. Houde, "Factors Influencing Clinical Evaluation of Drugs," Journal of American Medical Association, Vol. 167, August 30, 1958, p. 2141.

7, 1982. The questionnaire was the same both times. The answers to the questions will be given in percentages, because the same number of people did not take the test each time.

Questionnaire

1. Do you think a church should own a business?

	<u>1st Test Percent</u>	<u>2nd Test Percent</u>
a. Yes	<u>78</u>	<u>84</u>
b. No	<u>22</u>	<u>16</u>

2. Do you know what a food co-op is?

a. Yes	<u>28</u>	<u>83</u>
b. No	<u>72</u>	<u>17</u>

4. Should the church try to administer to all of the people's physical needs?

a. Yes	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
b. No	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

7. Do you think a minister should engage in commercial business?

a. Yes	<u>85</u>	<u>96</u>
b. No	<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>

8. If you were going to buy a business, what kind would you buy?

a. Clothing store	<u>35</u>	<u>23</u>
b. Farm	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
c. Food store	<u>63</u>	<u>69</u>
d. Other	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>

10. According to the Bible did Christ administer to all of the people's needs?

	<u>1st Test Percent</u>	<u>2nd Test Percent</u>
a. Yes	<u>97</u>	<u>100</u>
b. No	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>

14. Do you think businesspersons rip people off every chance they get?

a. Yes	<u>75</u>	<u>70</u>
b. No	<u>25</u>	<u>30</u>

15. Do you believe businesspersons have a moral conscience in business affairs?

a. Yes	<u>81</u>	<u>79</u>
b. No	<u>19</u>	<u>21</u>

16. Do you feel you get more done when you cooperate with others?

a. Yes	<u>81</u>	<u>89</u>
b. No	<u>19</u>	<u>11</u>

18. Are you your brother's keeper?

a. Yes	<u>84</u>	<u>92</u>
b. No	<u>16</u>	<u>8</u>

20. Would you cooperate with others if it was for your own benefit?

a. Yes	<u>79</u>	<u>86</u>
b. No	<u>21</u>	<u>16</u>

23. Do you think that the church needs a storehouse today as in the days of Malachi, A Lord's Storehouse?

Mal 3:10

	<u>1st Test Percent</u>	<u>2nd Test Percent</u>
a. Yes	<u>51</u>	<u>56</u>
b. No	<u>49</u>	<u>44</u>

24. Do you think that the church should hold all things in common in the LORD'S STOREHOUSE as the first church in the Acts of the Apostles? Act 2:44

a. Yes	<u>43</u>	<u>69</u>
b. No	<u>57</u>	<u>31</u>

The questions can be grouped into five categories.

1. Member's basic knowledge about the church (1, 4, 23, 24). A person must have a knowledge about the church. How the church relates to Christ and to each member. Questions (23, 24) show that the member at Ebenezer need additional training about church.
2. Member's basic knowledge of a food co-op and business (2, 7, 14, 15). Questions (14, 15) show that the members have a high distrust for business persons. They also had very little knowledge of a food co-op what it was and how it operates.
3. In question (10) show that the members have a good knowledge of Christ mission in the world.



4. Question (8) show the business preference of Ebenezer's members to be a food store. This question gives the organizer an idea as to what kind of cooperative venture the people will support.
5. Questions (16, 18, 20) show the relationship to one another. This is the cornerstone of the cooperative principle that it is people helping people. These questions show that Ebenezer's members sensitivity is high toward the needs of others.

#### Modifications

The food co-op design can be modified according to the design instrument. By using the data from questions (23, 24) it became clear that Ebenezer members need additional instruction about the nature of the church. If their understanding was any lower than what was recorded, a decision might be made to postpone the starting of the food co-op. It is imperative that the members see how a co-op relates to the mission and work of the church.

Since the organizing of a food co-op generally takes a long period of time, adjustments can be made throughout the process.

#### Summary

In this chapter the results of the evaluation of the food co-op design was evaluated by using an evaluation

instrument to identify areas of weakness and strength among the members. It can give the organizer indications of the readiness of the membership to take on the responsibility of organizing a food co-op. A vast amount of time can be wasted if the readiness factors are not taken under consideration.

### Conclusions

Chapter one of this paper, thesis, states the issue as one of survival for poor, disable and Black people. Their survival is being jeopardized because of government cuts in funding of social programs. Chapter two deals with the theological bases for cooperative ventures in the context of the AME Church. Chapter four shows a dire need for a cooperative venture in Ebenezer AME Church. Chapter five sets forth a conceptual model for a food co-op. Chapter six shows the implementation and the future projections of Ebenezer Food Co-Op goals. Chapter seven evaluates, and modifies the organizing process based on the results of the Lectures/Discussions classes.

Reflecting back over this project leads to the conclusions. These conclusions will be set forth.

The need for cooperative ventures in the AME Church is increasingly becoming the concern of the Bishopric and the General Conference. The AME Church is slowly becoming aware of the needs of cooperative ventures on the connectional level and also the local level.

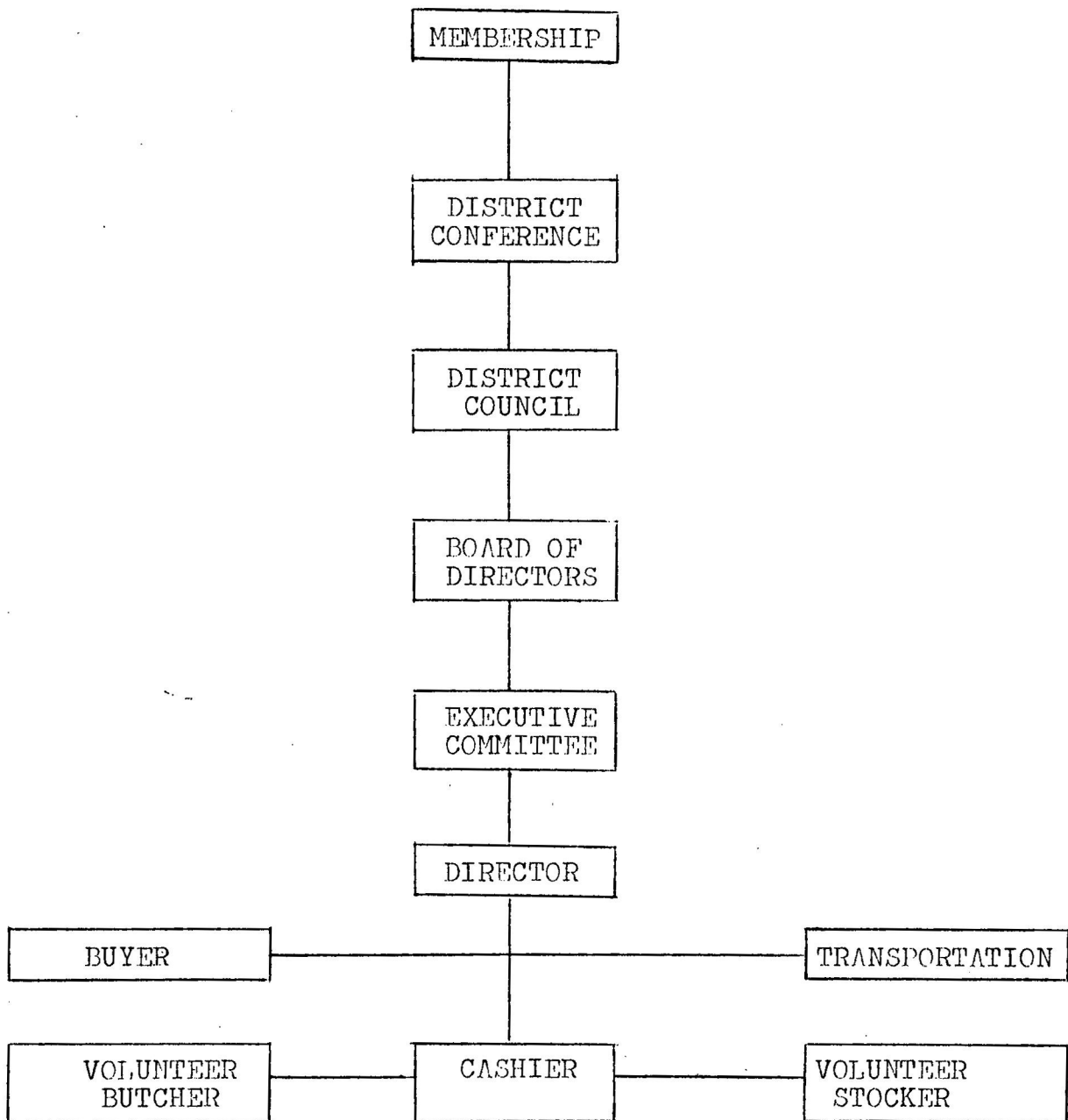
Reaganomics will hit the AME Church and other predominate Black Denominations hardest because of the large number of poor members. When the members in a Church hurt the whole Church hurts. The Church must institute programs that will help Blacks become self-reliant. The government programs are geared to make Blacks more dependent.

A food co-op on the District level would not only provide cheaper prices for food but also jobs which are so badly needed by Black people. The profit could be used for our colleges to make them financially sound.

The most important benefit of a church cooperative would be to change its image and declare that it had sided with the poor and needy against the powerful and greedy.

Finally, it has been my experience throughout this project that a person can lead faster than people can follow. As it is with marching soldiers if one of them fall behind they have to mark time until the one behind catches up. The most valuable lesson that I have learned is patience with people. They will move when they envision the dream of the dreamer.

APPENDIX A  
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR A  
DISTRICT CONFERENCE FOOD CO-OP



APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check only one answer.

1. Do you think a church should own a business?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you know what a food co-op is?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you believe that God requires you to care for your physical well being?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
4. Should the Church try to administer to all of the people's physical needs?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
5. Would you like to own your own business?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are you interested in your neighbor's total well being?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you think a minister should engage in commercial business?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
8. If you were going to buy a business, what kind would you buy?
  - a. Clothing store \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Farm \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Food store \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Others \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you interested in your own well being as a spiritual requirement?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
10. According to the Bible did Christ administer to all of the people's needs?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you believe that God helps those who refuse to help themselves?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you think that Christ condemned business when He overturned the moneychanger's table in the Temple?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you feel that the world owes you a living?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you think businesspersons rip people off every chance they get?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you believe business persons have a moral conscience in business affairs?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
16. Do you feel you can get more done when you cooperate with others?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
17. Do you think it would help you and others by starting a business with them?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_

18. Are you your brother's keeper?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
19. Christ said "that the poor you have with you always,"  
do you think that you should help the poor?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
20. Would you cooperate with others if it was for your  
own benefit?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
21. Do you think Christ condemn stealing or cheating in  
the Temple's business affairs?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
22. Do you think christians can be good business persons?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
23. Do you think that the church needs a storehouse today  
as in the days of MALACHI, A LORD'S STOREHOUSE? MAL  
8th Chapter
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
24. Do you think that the church should hold all things  
in common in the LORD'S STOREHOUSE as the first  
church in the Acts of the Apostles? Acts 2:44
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
25. Should the church try to administer to just all the  
people's spiritual needs?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_
26. Do you think God wants all people to share in the world  
resources equally?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
b. No \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

## FIVE CATEGORIES OF QUESTIONS

	QUESTIONS
1. Member's basic knowledge about the church.	<p>1. Do you think a church should own a business?</p> <p>4. Should the Church try to administer to all of the people's physical needs?</p> <p>23. Do you think that the church needs a storehouse today as in the days of MALACHI, A LORD'S STOREHOUSE? MAL 8th Chapter</p> <p>24. Do you think that the church should hold all things in common in the LORD'S STOREHOUSE as the first church in the Acts of the Apostles? Acts 2:44</p>
2. Member's basic knowledge of a food co-op and business.	<p>2. Do you know what a food co-op is?</p> <p>7. Do you think a minister should engage in commercial business?</p> <p>14. Do you think businesspersons rip people off every chance they get?</p> <p>15. Do you believe business persons have a moral conscience in business affairs?</p>



## QUESTIONS

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 3. Member's basic knowledge about Christ mission in the world. | 10. According to the Bible did Christ administer to all the people's needs? |
|--|---|
- 
- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 4. Member's business preference. | 8. If you were going to buy a business, what kind would you buy? |
|----------------------------------|--|
- 
- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 5. Member's sensitivity of others. | 16. Do you feel you can get more done when you co-operate with others? |
|                                    | 18. Are you your brother's keeper?                                     |
|                                    | 20. Would you cooperate with others if it was for your own benefit?    |

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